Lisheen - Or, The Test Of The Spirits

Patrick Augustine Sheehan

LISHEEN

ÓR, THE TEST OF THE SPIRITS

By The Very Rev.
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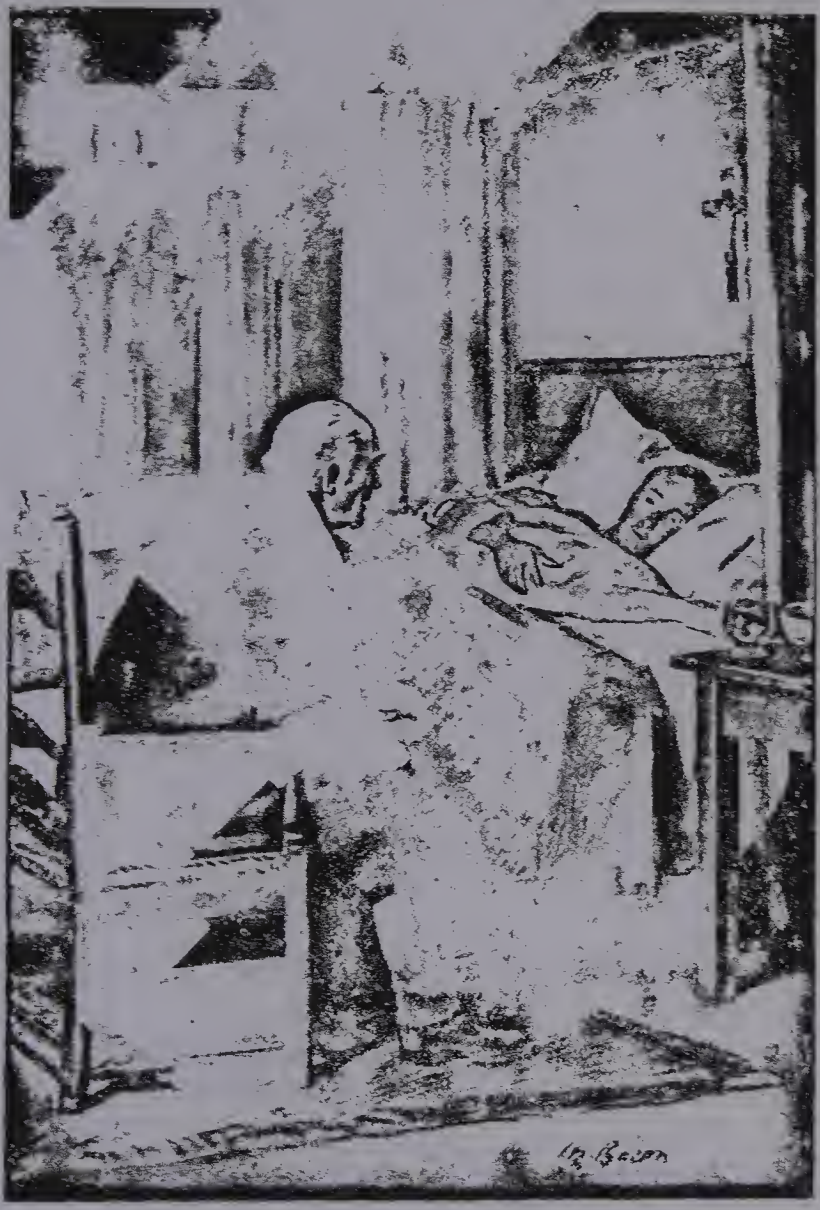
Author of

"My New Curate," "Miriam Lucas,"
"Luke Delmege,"
"[illegible]"

LISHEEN

OR, THE TEST OF THE SPIRITS



"But tell me—have you no friends . . . to whom we could write?"
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PART I

LISHEEN

CHAPTER I

CARAGH LAKE

CERTAIN travellers and artists have said that Caragh Lake is even more beautiful than Killarney. But let that pass. It is enough to say that this lovely and tranquil evening in the late summer of 189—, when the sun had gone down behind yonder hill, and left all the sky crimson, and when the crimson had faded into pink as reflected in the lake, and all the shadowed places were dark and tranquil mirrors of tree and shrub, the whole was a picture of peace, such as weary men long for in troubled dreams, and tire of so quickly when the dream becomes a reality. And the beauty was not marred, nay, it was emphasized by the dark blot of one shallow boat that just now lay very still and close to the shore. It had one occupant, a young man — that is, if one of thirty can be still considered young in these hot days when the hair blanches so quickly, and the wrinkles around the mouth gather so silently; but he looked young, and the crimson glow from the clouds seemed to add something to his youthful and calm appearance. His occupations, too, just now spoke of a stillness that seemed the external symbolism of his mind; for he was watching in some unconscious way a salmon-rod that stretched out

beyond the boat, and was mirrored in a long dark line on the water. He was, again unconsciously, smoking tiny cigarettes, which he rolled up between his fingers, lighted, and flung away in some mechanical manner; and he was, again unconsciously, reading from a tiny volume on his knees — a little book of three or four Russian dramas, the first of which was called *The Power of Darkness*. The first two dreamy occupations were comparatively harmless. The latter was perilous. For, certainly, of all dangerous amusements of the present day, that of reading is the most dangerous. If all the graduates who passed through Trinity College during the last fifty years had followed Bob Maxwell's example, this Ireland of ours would long ago have been a Republic. For great power streams out from those iron gates that open on College Green, only it divides itself, just at its embouchure into the outer world, into three sections — that of those who read professionally their Anatomies or Law Digests, and pass into snug sinecures and become naturally and, therefore, stubbornly strenuous supporters of the "things that are"; that of those who sweep through the world, sowing their wild oats everywhere, and then settle down into landed sinecures, and become strenuous supporters of the "things that are"; and that of those who, unattached to land or profession, give themselves up to thinking and study. These are the dangerous class — the supporters of things as "they ought to be." For if you leave college with the knowledge that a certain goddess was "pulchra adspectuque delectabilis"; or that a ram goes by the classical title of "magister gregis"; or if you are a muscular Christian, what a profane modern writer would call

a "flannelled oaf,"—it makes not much difference in the economies of life. Or, if you know that England governs Ireland, by "a whip and a sop," and that if you bend beneath the former and swallow the latter, you may become a Bencher and a K.C.B.,—this, too, makes little difference. But if you begin to read, first for amusement; then to be in "the swim of things, you know"; then to be hurried along the stream of modern thought and tendencies, and to become a dreamer of dawns and sunsets, and vast vistas that open up an imaginary New Heaven and New Earth to the masses who groan under the weight of the "things that are"—ah, then, you become dangerous and possibly *declassé*, if you are not wise enough to keep the new wine from breaking through the skins of speech.

To this dangerous class Bob Maxwell was dangerously approximating. He had begun to be troubled, not about a wife, although that interesting subject did occupy a share of his thoughts; not about his health, although it was chiefly for health's sake he was down here in the Kerry mountains, camping out under that white bell-tent that seems like a mere tiny convolvulus up there in that lovely valley where the fir trees are; but about, oh, shades of Trinity, his place in the universe, his work in this weird world, where he had only begun to wake up and find his existence. Now when a young man begins to ask the fatal question, what he has to do on this planet during the tiny span of life allotted to mortals, it is all up with him. For, either he pursues the question to its logical issue, and then he becomes an Ishmaelite to his class; or he sets it aside as an impertinence, and then he is haunted during his life with some awful consciousness

of failure, some ever-gnawing remembrance that he was called to the higher life, and preferred to grovel in the "sty of Epicurus."

Therefore, Bob Maxwell was troubled, and that little drama of Russian life did not smooth matters for him. It told of a peasantry sunk in all kinds of ignorance and superstition and vice; of millions on millions of human beings steeped to the lips in everything that could be physically and morally degrading; of a dense, brutal type of humanity, through which there gleam possibilities of nobleness that might satisfy the aspirations of the most ambitious dreamer of a risen and exalted humanity. The dreadful and poignant remorse that seizes the chief actor in this powerful drama, his magnificent exculpation of others, and self-condemnation, reveal depths of conscience and feeling that are generally unassociated with a criminal of such magnitude; and the author clearly wants to prove that, deep down beneath the stagnant and squalid surface of peasant life in Russia, there are hidden springs of nobility, that only need a strong hand to spread abroad and sweeten all the land.

"He knows it," soliloquized Bob Maxwell, as he held the book open in his fingers there in the waning twilight. "This man — count, too, and nobleman — had the courage to go down into the depths, and see things for himself; and then the greater courage of telling his countrymen what he thought of them. Yes, the grave clothes must be unloosed and the face cloth unfolded before a Christ can say: 'Arise and come forth!'"

There was a sudden tug on the rod that he had drawn beneath his knees; and, in an instant, the instinct of

sport banished every other thought and sentiment. He tossed the book aside, and it fell into the water. He gave it one thought only: "What will Mabel think of her pretty book?" and then he centred all his energies towards one supreme effort.

"A big fellow," he thought, as he allowed the line to reel out, whilst he kept a firm finger on the wheel, and held his rod deep down on a level with the lake. "It will take all my time and strength to land him."

For the boat now was being swiftly towed along the shore by the captive fish, which struggled gallantly for life, and tore along the water to get away from the invisible enemy.

Bob Maxwell contrived to lift from his watch chain a small boatswain's whistle, and to ring out its clear notes, whilst he held a strong hand on the rod.

"If only I had some one now," he thought, "to pull back, I'd soon exhaust the fellow. Or, if he keeps backing into the shallows —"

A queer figure appeared on the lake shore. A long, lank body was crowned with a shock of red hair that had never touched comb or brush. The red, hard flesh of the chest was clearly visible through the edges of the shirt that opened out into a V-like shape; and the bare legs were encased in a corduroy breeches, that was slit by the scissors of time, until it hung down in ribbons to the feet.

"Hould hard, yer 'anner! Hould hard, Master Bob," he gasped, as he ran along the lake shore, now stumbling over a boulder, now tripped up by a furze branch hidden in bracken, but wildly gesticulating and crying aloud in his excitement: "Hould hard, an' you'll get him in the shalla

water! Hould hard, yer 'anner! Oh! he's the divil of a fellow intirely! Pull, pull, yer 'anner! There!"

"Have you the gaff, you fool?" gasped Bob Maxwell in return, as he tried to steady the boat and call in the line. The boy did not answer, but fled up the hill; and in an instant the strain on the line slackened, and Bob thought the salmon had escaped, when he felt the sudden swish almost beneath the boat, and the rod was nearly jerked from his hand, as the line drew around after the fish, as it tore madly through the water. He had now to change his tactics, and by main strength keep the salmon from rushing into deep water, as the boat swiftly slewed around under the strain. Again the young man drew in the line slowly, and again let it go, as the salmon, maddened with pain and fright, rushed back to the shallows, until, after a long struggle, exhausted with pain and fatigue, it crept slowly into the mud and shingle, and hid there panting with flapping fins and quivering tail. Once more Bob Maxwell drew out the whistle and sent peal after peal through the hills. He heard a far-off shout, and guessed it was the bare-legged boy who, regardless of his neck, was leaping down the steep declivity. In a few minutes the boy was up to his knees in the water, wading towards the boat. Bob Maxwell held up a warning hand, and drew his line right up to the top of the rod, where the fish hung limp and quivering. In a moment, the keen point of the gaff was in the salmon's gills, and the boy, with savage delight, held him, whilst his master loosed the hook. Then, with a wild shout that came back in savage echoes from the hills, he drew up the dying fish and flung gaff and salmon into the boat.

"T'was a tight shave, d—— you!" said Maxwell. "What did I tell you — never to take that gaff home? Didn't I?"

"You did, yer 'anner, but —"

"There — no buts — you have the lie always ready to your lips. Here, jump in, and take the oars. That brute has almost pulled my arm out of its sockets."

The boy clambered over the side of the boat, and sat on the thwarts, drawing the two oars through the rowlocks silently, whilst his wet garments soon made a pool of water beneath his feet.

"Well, by Jove!" said Maxwell, looking admiringly at the silver fish as he lay, gasping faintly through the gills, and at long intervals lashing feebly with his tail, "he is a beauty. What will Queen Mab and the Major say? But you are all wet," he suddenly cried, as he watched the red, wet knees of the boy, and the long streamers of the torn corduroy dripping into the bottom of the boat.

The boy grinned, and almost blushed. He was unused to commiseration, and it rather disconcerted him.

"Never mind," said Maxwell, salving his own conscience, as they neared the pier, "pull straight in, and I'll hold her nose all right. There, that's good! Ease her now. Back her a little."

He jumped lightly from the boat, and keeping his rod untackled, he bade the boy follow him with the salmon and gaff to the hotel.

The lights were twinkling in the large drawing-room and dining-room of the hotel. It was the hollow, idle moment in hotel-life, when veranda and billiard-room and drawing-room are deserted; and men and women

are vesting themselves for the great sacrificial act of the day. As Maxwell approached the house, however, he saw two figures lingering on the porch. Mabel Willoughby, his cousin, was one. She rose and came towards him.

"Look here, Mab," he cried with enthusiasm, "look at this fellow that I hooked. Come here, you sir! Lay down the fish!"

The boy approached and laid the dead fish on the flags.

"Isn't he a beauty? What will the Major say?"

Mabel looked rather coldly on the salmon, and said, with a curious chill in her voice:

"Where is Tolstoi?"

"By Jove," said Maxwell, crestfallen, "I never thought — this fellow tugged, and your book fell into the water. I'll fetch it the first thing in the morning."

"I'm sorry," she replied, "the book belonged to Mr. Outram. It can hardly be replaced. Father is in the sitting-room."

And she turned away to her companion.

Thoroughly chilled and dispirited, Maxwell took up the fish; and, after a few minutes' deliberation, he passed through the hotel corridor and knocked at the Major's door.

"Come in!" said a gruff voice, and Maxwell entered.

The Major was sunk deep in a soft armchair, one leg swathed in flannel resting on a pillow. He must have been sleeping, for he gave a sudden start as Maxwell entered the room.

"Look here, Major, look at this fellow!" said the young man enthusiastically, expecting appreciation here. "Mabel would not condescend to look at him."

The Major was writhing in sudden agony. The surprise and the start had suddenly strained the swollen foot and it was now in raging pain.

"Yee-es"; said the Major, "put him down there! D—— you, Bob, why did you disturb me? Oh-h! Oh-h! Bloody wars! Oh-h! 'Tis a fine fellow! How did you hook him? Oh, bloody wars! Oh-h! Leave the room at once, d—— you, you numskull — you and your d—— fish. Don't look that way, but leave the room, or I'll strike you! Oh-h! Send me Mabel, and tell her to bring that liniment quick. And take that d—— fish out of my sight. The fellow stinks. You never killed him. Go, and be d——! Oh, bloody wars!"

Maxwell took up the unlucky fish silently, and went away.

The gruff Major called after him.

"Come back, you sir! Come back, Bob, I say! I didn't mean it! You know, well — oh! Bloody wars! Go away, and be d—— to you!"

"All right, sir!" said Bob, looking in. "It makes no matter. I'll call again, when you're better. Good night!"

He passed into the veranda again. Mabel was still there.

"The Major wants you," he said coldly, "he is in pain, and he bade you bring the liniment for his foot!"

And without another word he passed out into the darkening night, and, followed by the boy, went up along the white dusky road that passed across the hill, beneath which was hidden the deep, ferny valley where his white tent was pegged in the midst of gorse and bracken. His lamps had been lighted by his faithful

attendant Aleck, a shrewd Scotchman, remarkable for many things, but most of all for his habit of reticence. He was silent as a statue, nothing could disturb his equanimity; but when he spoke he threw out words that bit and stung; and he enjoyed so much the confidence of his master, that the latter never resented the freedom, although sometimes he said things that made Maxwell wince and rage in silence. The pretty bell-tent, now lighted up, looked bright and fresh as a nightflower down there in the dewy valley; and Maxwell thought, as he clambered down the rough grass-path, that, compared with the grand hotel, down there near the lake, with all its artificiality, its stuffy bedrooms, carpeted corridors, heavy dinners, and stiff company, he had the best of it.

"Here, Aleck," he cried, as he gave the salmon to his servant, "I had luck this evening. Isn't this a fine fellow?"

Aleck took the fish in silence.

"We'll have salmon cutlets at least for a week!" said Maxwell. "Is tea ready?"

The silent servitor pointed to the table in the tent. It was a pretty picture. The little round table, the spotless cloth, the white cup and saucer, the sliced beef and ham, the sprigs of fern here and there, the bright lamp, the camp-bed with its silk coverlet, the white canvas that swayed and undulated in the soft air, the flapping of the canvas beneath where the winds stole in, the creaking of the ropes, and the odour of a hundred country scents, of gorse and fern and wild flowers, and the cooler air that blew up from the lake, made the whole place a little fairy home of freshness and sweetness and delight.

Maxwell sat down to tea with a hearty relish. The air, the exercise, the early dinner, all combined to give him a healthy appetite, although now and again the remembrance of the chill reception he had got from Mabel, and the rough manner of her father, did recur with a certain poignancy and bitterness, against which he was not quite proof.

It was not the first time that he had experienced the capriciousness and fickle temper of his cousin. Her astonishing beauty hardly compensated for her wilful and most unjust changes of temper and attitude towards him. She played with his feelings in a manner that would have revolted a stronger man. But Maxwell had all the weakness and long-suffering disposition of those who are made up of generous principles and instincts. Nobility of soul is very generally accompanied with infirmity of will-power, because it is too generous to remember or resent. Hence a frantic resolution to emancipate himself from her slavery forever was dissipated by a look, a gesture, a half-spoken word — any of the hundred little artifices in which his cousin was such a proficient. But now, unknown to himself, he was working out his freedom. That strange sub-consciousness that operates silently beneath the consciousness that works through deliberation and judgment was working outward towards a new line of thought, which would render him perfectly insensible to his cousin and her coquetries. He was entering on a new realm — a kingdom where ideas, not the senses, had dominion; and where great thoughts, like wizards and enchantresses, would woo him to heights perilous enough in themselves and only to be trodden by firm feet, but far removed

from the valleys or the plains where the voluptuary is content to rest.

He bade Aleck remove the tea-things and refurnish the lamp; and he began to read, and read far into the night.

CHAPTER II

NONCONFORMISTS

WHAT he read was this. That all the great work of the world had been done by those who, discontented with existing things, sought to break through the crust of custom and establish a new order; that purely human institutions have an invincible tendency to decay, and the sooner that decay is pushed into dissolution the better for the hope and prospect of creating a fresh and more vital condition of things; that all the mighty men of the race were nonconformists, that is, they refused to accept the things that were, and pushed on to the things that ought to be. And that as in the moral order the ancient prophets of Judea protested against their own surroundings and gave their lives in forfeit for that protest; and as they were succeeded by reformer after reformer, who perished on the gibbet for an idea; so in the order of science Aristotle was pushed aside by Bacon, Bacon by Kant, Newton by his many successors; and in the social order all the generations of economists, statesmen, and philanthropists seem to have left their ideas of human social happiness concentrated in the terrible struggle of Socialism to reconstruct the fabric of human lives and happiness, or in the efforts of some solitary dreamer like Tolstoi to get back from the standard fictions of civilization to some great primeval model on which human lives

might be fashioned. This brought back the recollection of the lost book.

"Tolstoi," cried Maxwell, lowering the flame of the lamp, "a man of men, a living figure amongst clay puppets, a man with the courage of his convictions, who left behind him all the luxuries and comforts of his home and went down amongst the poor and became one of themselves, to study their lives and draw them up to higher models and larger issues. When shall we —?"

But that thought, suddenly interpreted to his reason by the very force of imagination, presented possibilities that made reason shrink from even contemplating the experiment. There was something transcendental and poetical about a Russian nobleman stripping himself of all his habits and traditions, and going down amongst the squalid Russian peasantry to study their lives, with the idea of transforming and raising them. But for an Irish landlord and gentleman, an M.A. of Trinity College, Dublin, to leave his own ranks and go down amongst the Irish peasantry to study the economics of their wretched condition — why, that is unimaginable! And yet, why?

The thought became so troublesome, and that Why? would repeat itself with such damnable iteration, that he took up the book again to distract himself.

This is what he read:

"If one not worn and wrinkled, sadly sage,
But joyous in the glory and the grace
That mix with evils here, and free to choose
Earth's loveliest at his will: one even as I
Who ache not, lack not, grieve not, save with griefs
Which are not mine, except as I am man; —

If such a one, having so much to give,
Gave all, laying it down for love of men,
And thenceforth spent himself to search for truth,

. . . . . .

Surely, at last, far off, sometime, somewhere,
The veil would lift for his deep-searching eyes,
The road would open for his painful feet,
That should be done for which he lost the world.
This will I do who have a realm to lose,
Because I love my realm, because my heart
Beats with each throb of all the hearts that ache,
Known and unknown, these that are mine and those
Which shall be mine, a thousand million more
Saved by this sacrifice I offer now."

"All the same, and everywhere the same," cried Maxwell. "That divine ideal of losing oneself to help on the common cause of humanity has been ever haunting the mind of man! There must be something in it, some echo of a far-off divine revelation, once articulately spoken by God to humanity, but stifled under the 'drums and tramplings' of the nations. What if I, I, Bob Maxwell, landlord and gentleman, the affianced of Queen Mab, the envied of my own class, should be as Sidartha, as Tolstoi — should break all the traditions of my class and creed, and go down amongst the people to raise them up unto a new consecration of life?"

The glory of the idea seemed to lift him above himself, until he began to think of all the sacrifices it involved, of all that it meant to himself and those dear to him. Then his heart sank. To go down among these wretched peasantry — ignorant, superstitious, sunk in all kinds of

sordid surroundings — to wear rough clothes, eat plain food, sleep on rugged beds, bear winter cold and summer heat unprotected by suitable raiment — above all, to associate with the people, whom he had always been taught to regard as serfs and worse — no; it was clearly impossible! These things were for heroes, and Bob Maxwell could not bring himself to believe that he was of heroic mould. Well, he would be at least compassionate and courteous in his conduct in future. He thought with a pang of conscience, which he had never felt before, how he had treated that poor boy, who did his menial work at a merely nominal compensation. He remembered the oaths he flung at him, the vile names he called him, the contemptuous manner in which he always treated him; and the patience, the equanimity, the long suffering of the boy; and the wistful look in his face under a shower of contumely, as of a hunted beast that pleads with his eyes for some mercy.

"I'm a brute," said Bob Maxwell, springing up and rushing from the tent. "Here, Aleck! Is Darby gone?"

"An hour ago!" said Aleck, who was smoking outside the tent.

"The poor devil was wet. He paddled through the lake for me. I wish I had given him a drop of whisky!"

"I gied it," said Aleck.

"Did you?" said his master. "I'm very glad!"

And Aleck was much surprised, but said nothing.

"Time to turn in, Aleck!" said Maxwell, anxious to originate some conversation as a distraction to his thoughts.

"Time enough!" said Aleck sententiously.

"When does the moon arise?" asked Maxwell.

"Between eleven and twelve!" said his man.

Maxwell returned to his tent and to his thoughts. He read and reflected, reflected and read, until the dawn wind lifted the flap of his tent. Then he undressed, and slept on till the morning was far advanced, and the moon was but a cloudy radiance far down in the west.

When he rose, a dainty breakfast of salmon cutlets, eggs, tea, and toast awaited him. There were no letters, no newspapers, and he thanked God for it. Darby Leary was sitting outside, near the ditch, his hands propped on his knees, and his head on his hands, thinking, dreaming in a kind of a half-conscious slumber. Maxwell looked at him for a moment; and then in a tone of voice that startled himself by its novelty, he said:

"Darby!"

Darby leaped up, as a dog at the voice of his master.

"I dropped a book yesterday in the lake; and you must find it for me. Would you recognize it?"

"The thing you had wid you in de boat?" asked Darby.

"Yes; I don't mean the fishing-rod, you know!"

Darby grinned acquiescence.

"Well, run down to the hotel pier, loose the boat, and pull round to where we gaffed the salmon, and wait there for me. You should find the book somewhere along there!"

Darby chuckled with delight at the idea. To be alone in the boat, even for an hour or two, was heaven. He ran down the mountain road, his bare feet throwing up little clouds of dust as he went.

Maxwell turned round, and asked Aleck the way to Darby's cabin.

"Ye canna help seein' it," said Aleck, "that is, if ye ken disteenguish it from the furze and bracken. First house to the left, whin ye crass the burn that runs doon to the loch!"

And Maxwell, enjoying the lovely morning, the fresh pure air, the scents of the mountain herbs, and the superb views that broke around him at every turn in the mountain road, went forward, eager to know a little of these strange people, yet shuddering at the thought of coming into closer contact with them. "If one could raise them," he thought, "but the cost, the cost!"

He had no trouble in finding the wretched cabin; but if he had been told that it was a pig-sty, he would have readily believed it. Four mud-walls, about five or six feet high, pierced by a window not quite a foot square, and a door so low one had to bend oneself double to enter, supported a ragged roof of thatch and thistles, broken here and there where long leaves of grass grew, and held down by straw-ropes, or sugans, weighted with heavy stones. There was a pool of slimy, fetid water before the door, where four or five ducks cackled proudly; and from a neighbouring recess, so like the habitation of men that it seemed but a cabin in miniature, came the low gruntings of a pig. All was poor, lowly, squalid — all but the merry little burn that crossed the road, sparkling gaily in the morning sunlight, and the sweet, clean birds that perched everywhere without soiling themselves, and sang their little songs of freedom and happiness.

Maxwell looked at the place for a while, doubtful whether he would pursue his investigation further. The place was thoroughly uninviting; but the deeper the

degradation, he reflected, the higher the resurrection. He crossed the rough pathway; and, bending low, he entered the cabin. A flock of chickens, that were feeding on broken potatoes on the rugged and muddy floor, protested loudly against the intrusion. An old woman rose up painfully from a low seat near the fire; and spreading out her check apron, she sought to drive away the fowls, whilst at the same time she curtsied deeply, and looked at the unexpected visitor with a pitiful face of surprise and alarm.

Maxwell was astonished to see how perfectly clean and decent the old woman looked amidst such unpromising surroundings. The check apron, which probably concealed a more or less ragged dress, the red shawl that was crossed on her breast, the spotless cap that covered without concealing her gray hairs — all looked quite out of keeping with the dirty floor and the black and rotten thatch, although they quite suited the clear, healthy complexion of the old and feeble woman. She would have said "God save you!" to any ordinary visitor, and proffered a chair; but she felt that this was one of the "ginthry," and she awaited in silence his introduction.

"Is Darby at home?" said Maxwell, abruptly.

"No, yer 'anner"; replied the old woman. "He's just gone down to the masther, God bless him!"

"Why do you say, God bless him?" said Maxwell. "Do you know him?"

"Well, thin, indeed, yer 'anner, I don't," said the old woman. "I never set eyes on him a-yet. But sure, av I did, I'd go down on me two knees to ask God to bless him for what he's doin' for me poor little bhoy!"

This outburst of gratitude was in such singular contrast to his own remorse of the preceding night, that Maxwell did not know what to think. He then determined to probe further to see how far it was genuine.

"Oh, come now," he said, "I know Darby has as hard a master as ever ground the faces of the poor. I heard him curse Darby, and call him all kinds of bad names!"

"Wisha, I suppose you did, yer 'anner," answered the poor woman. "Sure I mustn't contradict you. But sure that's a way the ginthry has wid 'em. I suppose they are brought up to it!"

"And then," continued Maxwell, "he has your son out, day and night, in wet and cold, in the river and in the lake up to his waist in water; and, from all I can hear, he hardly gives him enough in wages to keep body and soul together."

"Wisha, thin, whoever was the busybody to tell yer 'anner that," said the old woman, "would be betther imployed. What have poor people to do but work; and sure Darby isn't made of salt that a shower of rain 'ud melt him!"

"But then his master ought to pay him decently!" said Maxwell. "He's a rich man, and he can well afford to pay decent wages."

"Maybe your 'anner is thinkin' of imployin' the poor bhoy yerself," said the old woman. "But to tell ye the truth, I'm afraid Darby won't lave the masther he has, av ye gev him double the wages —"

"You have a poor place here, my poor woman," said Maxwell, suddenly turning the conversation. He was touched in spite of himself.

"'Tis poor, yer 'anner, but clane," said the old woman. "I try to keep it as clane as I can; but I'm ould, and I haven't the strinth I had."

"That roof will fall soon," said Maxwell, watching the grimy timbers and rotten thatch that hung down in wisps from the ceiling.

"'Twill hould this year," said the old woman, "and maybe we'll be able to get half a ton of straw with Darby's wages agin the winther."

"Half a ton of straw!" said Maxwell. "How much would that cost?"

"Oh, a power an' all of money!" said the old woman. "The farmers do be thrashin' now, an' we might be able to get it chaper than in the spring."

"Would it cost five pounds?" asked Maxwell.

The old woman nearly got a fit.

"Five pounds? Five pounds? Yerra, no, to be sure, yer 'anner, nor half, nor quarter. Five pounds! Yerra, 'tis a long time we'd be waitin' before five pounds would come our way!"

"Well, then, if Darby's master is as good as you say he is, you shouldn't want a roof or thatch over your heads very long!"

"God is good, yer 'anner! God is good, an' he said he would! We can wait a bit longer, as we waited so long!"

Maxwell would have liked to prolong the conversation. It was novel, and deeply interesting to him; but the day was wearing onward, and he had seen enough to give him material for another evening meditation. He was fully determined to see more of this strange people, although

he could not make up his mind to live their lives. And then the thought would occur: But how am I to raise them, if I cannot get a footing amongst them? One needs a fulcrum to move the world, or to raise up any of its fallen. You cannot work from without. All the processes must be inward; and all moral development is on the same lines as physical development, from some great secret principle of strength and vitality. Is that principle wanting in these people altogether; or has it been checked by malignant influences? Yes, that is the problem.

CHAPTER III

A TALISMAN

Darby Leary was the happy boy as he ran, or rather leaped, down the dusty road that led from the hills to the lake-level. The prospect of being sole possessor of the boat, even for a couple of hours, of putting his red, bare, dusty feet on the thwarts, of leaning back and drawing the oars through the yielding water, of hearing the zip! zip! of the waves around the prow, of resting in cool shades, and watching for the dark form of the salmon, lying still with quivering fins and watchful eyes — was so utterly delightful that he leaped up and down the hedges, snapped his fingers, flung stones at imaginary birds and rabbits, sang little snatches of old Irish songs, and gave himself to a very esctasy of anticipated raptures. He soon came in sight of the pier; and there, yes, there was the little punt rocking gently on the water, and tugging at the rope, as if she were a living, aquatic thing that was striving to get back to its elemental freedom. He had got into the boat, and was loosening with his strong, bony fingers the rope, when he was startled by a peremptory order:

"Stop that, and come out, you sir, at once!"

Darby looked around wonderingly, and saw sitting on a garden seat a gentleman, whom he recognised as one of the visitors at the hotel. The gentleman appeared to be

engrossed in his pipe and book; and Darby, seeing no signs of hostility, interpreted this challenge as something addressed to someone else, just then invisible. He again proceeded to untie the knot, when the same gruff voice challenged him again:

"Do you hear me, you sir? Drop that rope and come out of the boat!"

This time there was no mistake. Darby dropped the rope, but thought he had a right to protest.

"The masther tould me to pull de boat around the shore to the shallas," he said.

"The master?" said Outram. "What master?"

"Misther Maxall," said Darby. "The gintleman that lives up in the tint, and brung the salmon here last night."

"Go tell your master," said Outram, "that that boat is hotel property, and is at the service of the visitors. I want that boat for a lady."

"But the masther," said Darby, now in a quandary between the two "gintlemen," "tould me —"

"I tell you," said Outram, waxing very angry, "to let that boat where it is, or I'll break your head."

"But the masther will be as mad as blazes," pleaded Darby in agony. "He wants to fish up somethin' he lost yesterday in the lake —"

"Come out at once, you dog," said Outram, now stung with vexation and pride, as he saw Mabel Willoughby, with her boat shawls on her arm, coming down the little avenue. "Come out, or, by gad, I'll pitch you into the water."

He had come over, and now stood on the little pier, overlooking the boat. Darby was still undecided. The

prospect of a pleasant row across the lake, backed with his master's orders, was too much even for his innate and habitual dread of the gentry.

"What is the matter?" said Mabel, standing by Outram's side.

"This fellow and his 'masther,' as he calls him, want to monopolize the boat. It is the hotel property, as you know, and no one has any rights in it beyond another. Come, come, I'll stand no more nonsense," he cried to Darby, who was still undecided, and looked a picture of helplessness, as he drew the loosened rope through the iron ring on the pier.

It was too much for Outram's temper. He leaped in, almost upsetting the punt; and, as the rocking of the boat threw Darby out of his centre, Outram shoved him roughly, and the boy fell headlong into the lake.

Mabel gave a little shriek; but Darby swam like a dog, and very soon pulled himself, wet through and dripping, on to some sedges that lined the lake beyond the pier. Outram, without glancing at him, held the rope taut through the ring with his left hand, with his right he handed Mabel into the boat; and then, sitting down with some caution, lest the rocking should frighten his companion, he pulled the punt, with a few long, easy strokes, far into the lake.

"Maybe I'll be even with you some day," said Darby, casting a look after the boat and its occupants that would have disturbed them, probably, if they could have interpreted it rightly. He then turned round and trotted home, his wet garments leaving little streams of water as he went along.

Bob Maxwell, meanwhile, had gone down from the widow's cabin, past his tent, and was leisurely making his way through narrow and sinuous paths in the shrubs and heather to the edge of the lake. That brief interview with the old woman had again stirred up strange reflections in his mind. It was quite clear that here was a world of which hitherto he had been profoundly ignorant — a world where poverty reigned supreme, and yet was but a gentle tyrant, for patience and resignation under hard circumstances made easy a yoke that seemed to one, not inured to hardship, impossible to bear. And what a gulf between his condition and theirs! What a colossal sum five pounds seemed to the imagination of that poor woman — five pounds, that he had often flung away on a race, on a dog, and thought no further of it. And that five pounds, wrung from the sweat and labour of these toiling and patient poor! There was some abominable blunder here in the economy of things; and though his education and training and tradition had hitherto led him to think lightly of such matters, some deep chord, hidden from his own consciousness, was now stirred, and throbbed with new emotions of a generous and noble spirit. But Bob Maxwell was mercurial, like all such spirits; and his education was far from being complete. The great principles that alone can live amidst the stress and storm of passion and prejudice had not yet taken root. Only the fair seeds had been lodged on the surface of his soul, which every wind might drive away and disperse.

Hence, when he reached the lake, and saw no trace of his boat, he leaped into a sudden rage against Darby. "D —— them!" he said, anathematizing Darby and

his class, "one can never trust them. They are all right to-day; and to-morrow — What can ail the fellow, I wonder? He had plenty of time to get down to the pier and pull the punt around. Probably he met a chum, and is now calmly smoking against the pier-wall."

He sat down on some withered bracken, drew out his cigarette-case, and smoked. This calmed his passion for the moment; but he had hardly rolled and lighted a second cigarette, when the soft plash of oars woke him from a reverie; and looking around, he just caught the black nose of the punt rounding the angle of the lake, over which some willow trees were bending. The flutter of a lady's veil made his heart beat quicker for a moment, as he thought Mabel had ordered Darby to take her with him. Then, another glance showed the long, lithe, muscular form of Outram, whose gray jacket and white flannels showed bright in the sunlight. Maxwell was on his feet in an instant; and in another moment he withdrew into the shelter of the copse. He did not care to be seen there by these two; nor did he care to observe them from his hiding-place. But some singular fascination held him there; and he stood sheltered from observation, but rooted to the ground by the spell of their presence.

Outram was leisurely drawing his oars through the placid water, each swing showing his powerful chest and muscles. His eyes were fixed on the face of his companion; and she, with face averted, was drawing her ungloved hand through the cool ripples made by the boat. To Maxwell the scene was maddening; and he made a hundred furious and frantic resolutions about his future. Then the oar struck something, and Mabel stretching

out her hand drew from the lake the swollen, saturated volume he had dropped the evening before. He saw her hold it up in a gingerly way; then drop it into the boat, with a merry laugh that echoed over the waters. Outram raised the oars, and allowed the boat to drift; and in a few minutes they had passed from Maxwell's sight.

He would have given way to an outburst of unrestrained passion; but it was one of those occasions when reason comes to the rescue, and, brushing emotion aside, replaces it with a firm, desperate resolve. It was all over now between himself and his cousin. This little episode revealed many things, or rather confirmed his belief in suspicions already harboured. And somehow his reading, his reflections, his experiences, had all the tendency to compel him to look away from this siren and all that an alliance with her promised of happiness and pride; and to gaze forward to more heroic paths of self-denial and endurance for himself, and the possibility of making a noble use of a life that might be cut short at any time. For it was under medical advice that Bob Maxwell had come down to these primitive regions, and was now living an open-air and strictly temperate life. He had an inherited tendency to gout; and had already had two severe rheumatic attacks. And, although assured that there was no heart lesion, there was the predisposition to a disease, that could only be averted by exercise, temperance, and care. This narrow hold on life often leads men to think seriously of things, which in the full lustiness of unimpaired health they would probably ignore. The thought of a probably short life, and the possibility of making it a noble one, was every day impressing itself

more deeply on the young man's mind. He went slowly homewards. One tie to the old life, the life of convention and tradition, was rudely broken.

"Did you see Darby, Aleck?" he asked his valet.

"He gaed up yon hill an hour agone, dripping like a spoonge," said Aleck.

"He did not call here?" said Maxwell.

"Nae; I guess the laddie was nae presentable!"

Maxwell was silent; and the shrewd Scotchman saw at a glance that something untoward had happened.

"Tak' yer gun, and kill somethin'," he said.

And Maxwell obeyed him.

He went up towards the mountains, trudging along in a kind of desperation. He broke from the main road into the heather, pursued little footpaths worn by winter rains and the feet of the country folks, who came down from their cabins, Sunday after Sunday, to Mass in the valley. He was an eager sportsman, but somehow his usual enthusiasm was to-day absent. Birds rose up around him, whistled in shrill alarm, and whirred away unharmed and unhurt. He had climbed steep hills, looked in an unconscious way down from their summits on lake and hotel, nestling far below; then turned again and climbed still greater heights, trying by the sheer force of physical exercise to drive away the fierce thoughts that were tormenting him. At last he startled a hare in her form, and mechanically he raised his gun. A rough voice behind him shouted:

"Fire, yer 'anner, fire!"

He pulled the two triggers simultaneously, and the animal rolled over as if dead. Darby sprang forward

and took it up. Maxwell came over and looked at the pitiful appeal in the eyes of the dying animal. He was ashamed of himself.

"It was an unsportsmanlike act," he thought, and so it was.

"Why did you shout, Darby?" he cried. "It is mean to shoot a hare."

"Yerra, what harrum is it, yer 'anner?" said Darby. "It will make grate soup intirely for the Scotchman."

"Take it home to your mother," said Maxwell. Then, as if recollecting something, he said:

"You didn't take my orders this morning. I waited down near the lake for nearly an hour; and you never turned up with the punt."

"The gintleman wouldn't lave me," said Darby.

"What gintleman?" queried Maxwell.

"The big, long gintleman wid the sandy hair and whiskers," said Darby.

"Mr. Outram? What did he say?" asked Maxwell.

"Begobs, it wasn't what he said, but what he done," replied Darby.

"What did he do?" said Maxwell, interested beyond appearance.

"'Come out,' sez he," replied Darby. "'I won't,' sez I. 'Come out,' agin sez he. 'I won't,' sez I. Thin he jumped in and flung me into the wather, head foremost."

"What?" cried Maxwell, "flung you into the lake?"

"Yes, begobs"; replied Darby. "Look at me. I'm not dhry a-yet!"

Maxwell went over and felt the boy's garments. They

were still damp and clung close to his long, lank figure.

"Sit down," said Maxwell, "and tell me how it all happened!"

Darby sat down at a respectful distance from his master, and narrated in detail all that had occurred from the first gruff order until he found himself in the lake.

"Why didn't you pitch him out of the boat when he dared seize it?" said Maxwell when the boy had finished.

"Yerra, is it me, yer 'anner?" said Darby, with a face of horror and incredulity, "is it me to tetch a gintleman?"

"He tried to drown you!" said Maxwell.

"But he's a gintleman, an' I'm only a poor bhoy," said Darby. "Sure they'd hang me in Tralee gaol if I threw him in."

"It's the scoundrel himself that should be hanged," said Maxwell. "Come, the matter mustn't rest here. You must come with me."

"Oh, for the love of God, yer 'anner," pleaded Darby. "lave the matter alone."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," said Maxwell. "You'll have to come down this moment and swear information at the constabulary depot against that ruffian. I'll have him arrested this evening, so help me God!"

Darby was now thoroughly frightened. To approach the police office at all would have been a trial. To approach it to take an oath would be still more dreadful. To swear informations against a gentleman would be the climax. Maxwell urged him, coaxed him, threatened him. He was anxious to drag the matter before the public if he could. He had his own object in view. It was all in

vain. Darby saw, with the shrewdness of his class, that not only would he not be listened to, but that he would forfeit any chance of being employed again by the visitors at the hotel. Whatever his own desire or promptings of revenge might be, this was not the time or place. At last Maxwell let him go.

"You are a coward, Darby," he said, "like all your class."

"I suppose I am, yer 'anner," said Darby; "but poor people must keep themselves quiet, where they're makin' a livin'."

"I suppose so," said Maxwell, "but that scoundrel was a greater coward than you."

He went down to the hotel after dinner; and was shown into the Major's room. The major was in an amiable mood.

"Hallo! Bob, how are you? What did you catch to-day?"

"You must ask Miss Willoughby and Mr. Outram that question," he said. "They had the boat to-day."

"Ye-es," said the Major in a dubious kind of way. "I heard Mabel say she had a row on the lake with Outram. Why weren't you with them?"

"The punt has scarcely room for two," said Maxwell. "I ran over the mountains with my gun. But I have just run down, sir, to say good-bye. I am off to Dublin to-morrow."

"No," said the Major, quite alarmed. "Why, what's the matter?"

"Well, you see, the year is running late," said Bob. "My agent writes to say he cannot get in the September

rents; the evenings are getting cold, and I don't want to get back that rheumatism again."

The Major was silent. Bob was advancing too many reasons. He was proving too much.

"Well," he said at length, "I shall be sorry. But we must all be clearing out soon. With these d—— tourists and carpet-baggers filling every seat at table, and grinning in at every window, the place is intolerable."

"Well, good-bye, sir," said Maxwell, extending his hand.

"Good-bye," said the Major, reluctantly. Then, when Maxwell was moving to the door, he cried out:

"I say, Bob!"

Maxwell came back.

"You didn't mind those hasty expressions of mine last night? 'Tis all this d—— gout, you know. You'll have it yet, so have pity on a poor sufferer. Say, you didn't mind?"

"Don't speak about it, sir!" said Maxwell. "I forgot all about it before I had got to my tent. 'Twasn't worth mentioning."

"Thanks. You were always a good fellow. Good-bye! Of course you'll see Mabel?"

This time Maxwell did not reply.

As he passed out there was a group on the veranda. It was quite dark. Outram, the centre of an admiring circle, was showing how a wonderful ring which he wore on his middle finger emitted waves of light, exactly like phosphorus, in the dark. He had got it, bought it, stolen it, begged it, he said, from a certain Bráhmin in India. It was a kind of opal, dull during the day, like a cataract

on a blind man's eye. It was only in the dark it smoked and shone.

"It is a talisman," he heard Outram saying. "Whoever wears it cannot die a violent death. I have seen it proved."

CHAPTER IV

A TOLSTOI DEBATE

On a lovely autumn evening, later on in the year in which the little incidents narrated in the previous chapters had occurred, Owen McAuliffe sat at the door of his little cottage in Lisheen. He was bent forward, his hands clasped between his knees, denoting the usual meditative attitude of his class. He was not an old man; but his face was furrowed deeply with care, the corners of his mouth drooped downwards, and there was a network of wrinkles in his neck. His hands were coarse and callous from constant work; and the strong nails on his fingers were hard as iron, and much of an iron hue. He was thinking; and thinking, like every other poor Irish farmer, of his hard lot. Toil and trouble — toil during labouring hours, and trouble in the hours of relaxation — this is their lot in life. A great sycamore tree in front of the house was turning yellow under the autumnal frosts; and across the level landscape that stretched to the horizon, the whole scene was dappled red and russet and saffron, in hedgerow, plantation, and wood. But he had no eyes for such things. His thoughts were turned inward, searching for a solution of the problems of life. The urgent and immediate problem was, first, to meet the demand for the March rent that had just come in; and second, how to procure labour to turn up the fields for the spring

sowing. Out of a family of eight children, two alone, a boy and a girl, remained for his old age. The rest had gone to America, like the majority of their fellow-countrymen. Some apparently had done well and kept up a correspondence with the old home for a time, then dropped it. Some had never written after the landing-letter. What had become of them no one knew. The two remaining children, infected with the common madness, that would exchange for the prospect of gold all the sweetness and beauty of life for all its foulness and sordidness, were straining against the bonds of affection that held them captives at home, and pining for the fatal liberty that would plunge them into the vortex of American life. Some tillage had to be done, because the price of cattle had gone down, and there had been some severe losses during the year. And there was only this boy, Pierce, or Pierry, as he was called. Not a labourer was to be had for love or money. The price of labour had gone up so high, that only the strong farmers were able to keep and support one.

Owen McAuliffe sat a long time in meditation, turning over the eternal problem in his mind. He was aroused by the voice of his wife:

"Let ye cum in to the supper. The praties will be could!"

The invitation was addressed to her husband, sitting pensively in the porch, and to her son, who, after having seen everything in barn, dairy, and outhouse snug for the night, was looking with longing eyes towards where the sun, in a splendid drapery of clouds, was sinking slowly into the west.

The two men went in with that heavy and weary step that betokens not so much the leaden foot as the burdened mind, and sat down on the humble sugan chairs around the kitchen table that was drawn close under the solitary and narrow window. There was no table cloth, but a pile of smoking potatoes, bursting their jackets, garnished the table; and there were two wooden porringers of milk, each with a perpendicular handle, that needed some experience to use it. The mother and her daughter, a bright country lass of eighteen or twenty years, stood apart, and watched or tended the men. They had had tea an hour before; they left the more substantial things for the labourers.

The meal proceeded in silence, the two men peeling the potatoes with their rough nails, and swallowing each with mouthfuls of sweet milk. The mother was bending over the hearth-fire, and Debbie was dragging backward and forward huge kettles or saucepans, when the older man said:

"How much have we in the house, Maurya, to meet the agint?"

"Betwane seven and eight pounds, didn't I tell ye?" said the mother.

"He won't take it," said the old man. "He'll pitch it back, as he did afore."

"Thin, I'd pitch *him* to the divil," said Pierry in a passionate way. "Bejabs, it is a quare thing intirely: we starving on praties and milk, and him dragging the life-blood from us!"

"You shouldn't fault the praties an' milk," said his father. "God give them; and we would be badly off without 'em."

"I'm not faulting them," said Pierry. "But it is the divil's own quare thing that we should be workin' for the likes of that fellow, when there's a free land and plenty to eat and dhrink acrass the wather."

"You're talkin' of that too much," said the mother, interfering. "Many a good man, and good woman, too, was reared on praties an' milk. An' as for America, there's good an' bad news, I suppose. At laste, I wish 'twas sunk in the say, before I ever hard of it."

"There's no use in codraulin' about that subjec'," said Owen McAuliffe, rising from the table, and taking out his pipe to redden it, "America or no America, how am I to meet the agint on Friday, I wants to know?"

"Take in the seven pounds," said Pierry, not much mollified by his mother's remarks, "ax him for a reduction, or time; an' if he refuses, put it in your pocket, an' come home!"

"And thin, the attorney's letter an' the writ in three days, an' all the expinse besides," said his father.

"Let 'em do their best," said his son. "Dhrive the cattle up to the hills, anny of the naybours will give them grass; and let the bailiffs come here for a warrum welkum!"

"Don't mind that foolish boy," said the mother. "Thry ould Dinis McCarthy agin. He'll gwine to the bank and rise it wid you."

"I don't like bein' behoulden to Dinis agin," answered her husband. "He made mountains about it the last time."

There was a long pause of silence. The old man smoked calmly, sitting on a rough slate bench near the hearth; the mother sat looking pensively at the fire;

Pierry looked through the narrow window in a sullen, angry manner. Debbie was clearing away the supper refuse from the table. When she had finished, she came over and stood looking down at her father and mother. Then she said quietly:

"I think Pierry is right, mother. There's nayther sinse nor raison in our stopping here, toiling from morning to night, making money for the landlord, when there's a free counthry only five days' journey across the wather. Let us sell out, in God's Name! Lizzie is dying to have us all in Boston, where nayther you nor father need ever wet yere hands agin; but have carpets ondher yere feet, an' the besht of atin' an' dhrinkin'. Come, let us go, in God's Name."

She spoke earnestly, almost passionately. It was her thought, sleeping and waking.

There was another deep pause of silence. The poor old mother was silently weeping. It was not the first or second time this proposal, which was heart-breaking to her, had been made by her children. She knew that nothing could exorcise the dread discontent of home-life, the dread enchantment of America. And this was her own home. Here she was born (for Owen McAuliffe had merely come in with a couple of hundred pounds from the County Limerick); here she was brought up; here she learned her prayers and first lessons; here she said good-bye to her dead parents; here, on this kitchen floor, she had danced the night of her marriage; and here were her eight children born and brought up with her more than usual solicitude. She knew every rafter in the blackened roof, every stone in the fireplace, every bush on the hedges, every tree around

her fields. Every winter had brought its songs and stories for sixty years around that hearth. Every summer the golden fields and the cross-road dances. True, her life had been a life of sorrow and hardship; but these very things consecrated the place still more. Every soul loves the place of its crucifixion; and her humble Calvary was knit into her life, like a living thing. And to think of leaving all that, and going away into a strange, mysterious country, a peopled desert, where for every one that crossed its desolation and emerged successful, a hundred had gone down and were lost! Oh, no; the thought was too dreadful; and it broke out in the eloquence of her silent tears.

Owen McAuliffe bore the ordeal for a time. Then, rising up, he simply pointed with his pipe at the weeping woman, and said:

"There!"

He walked out slowly into the field beyond the yard.

Debbie, ashamed of her mistake, which, however, she had often made before, came over to her brother. They were a splendid picture, but gloom and sorrow were over them that evening. After a pause, Debbie said in a soft undertone:

"You'll be turnin' the high field to-morra?"

"I suppose so," he replied. "'Tis the divil's own job for wan man; and father can't do much now!"

"Who knows?" said Debbie, trying to give him a courage she did not feel herself. "God may sind some wan this way!"

"Yes," he said bitterly. "Some wan who'll ate us out of house and home, and want more wages than the rint."

It was too true. She desisted.

That same evening, at a certain aristocratic club in Dawson Street, Dublin, five or six gentlemen were in the smoking-room, discussing the papers and the world-news. They had met after luncheon for business; and the nature of the business might be guessed from a sheaf of telegrams that had been sent at five o'clock over the country and to the great landlord clubs and centres in the cities. The telegrams were brief:

No purchase. No abatement. Bide time.

Six words, which in a month's time carried desolation into many a Munster and Connemara cabin.

This decision, however, was not arrived at without a fierce and angry debate; and it was by no means unanimous. One or two members of the landlord class had vehemently opposed it, partly on grounds of prudence, partly for humanitarian motives. Bob Maxwell had spoken with unusual heat, and very much to the surprise of his hearers, against any movement that might tend to accentuate the angry feelings of the people, and their antagonism to the landlord class. The debate was brought into the smoking-room, and was continued thus:

"I can't see, Maxwell, for the life of me, what you are up to," said a great burly specimen of his class, clean-shaven, despotic, swinging his arms everywhere, as if he were always using the whip. "Or where the devil you picked up these newfangled notions. We are losing everything we have, bit by bit, and will soon be reduced to the rank of paupers —"

"Better be paupers yourselves, than keep others paupers," interjected Maxwell. "The whole of this unhappy country is pauperized and beggared by what you are

pleased to call the rights of property. In God's Name, try and recognise the fact that your countrymen have bodies and souls like yourselves, and have a right to live as well as you!"

"But, look here, this is all d——d socialism and communism. You want to upset everything. Can't you leave things as they are, and do as your forefathers before you?"

"Most certainly not," said Maxwell. "My forefathers, as you call them, inherited evil traditions, and, by Heaven, 'tis time to break them. All over the world the people are rising up and crying aloud; and I tell you, you must listen to them, or suffer for it."

"Pshaw!" cried another landlord. "They have tried everything they could here, even murder, and they have failed. One year of resolute government, and there was peace forever."

"You have ill-measured the people's power," said Maxwell. "They have learned it in France; they have been taught it in Hungary and Austria; slowly they are fathoming its depths and strength in Russia. Take care, you may have to learn it here also, and the lesson will be a bitter one."

"They have done their best, d—— them," said the first speaker, "to crush and pauperize us; and now they're going. In a few years, we'll have decent English and Scotchmen on our lands —"

"And will they pay your rents?" asked Maxwell.

There was no answer.

Outram, who had come home to enjoy his property in Ireland, and who had not the benefit of experience to

subdue his contempt for another subject race, had been silent during the discussion. There was a distinct coolness between himself and Maxwell; and he did not trust his temper to speak, although he raged at the ideas Maxwell was propounding. At last, as the dinner hour approached, he said with almost imperceptible sarcasm:

"Mr. Maxwell has the advantage in debate over you, gentlemen. He is a reading man."

"Reading? What has reading to do with the matter?" said one of the former speakers. "This is a question of common sense and self-preservation!"

"Yes," said Outram, with some malice, "but if you read of noblemen in other countries giving up everything, and going down amongst the common people and living their lives, you are naturally disposed to do the same yourself."

"Going down amongst the people and leading their lives?" echoed the other. "What infernal lunatic has done that?"

"Ask Maxwell," said Outram. "I know but little about him!"

Maxwell bit his lip and said nothing. There was a silence for a few minutes. Then Outram continued:

"It is quite true that some, even Tolstoi's own intimates — you have heard of Tolstoi, of course?"

"Tolstoi! Tolstoi! Never. Who is he and what is he?"

"Well, as Maxwell who knows him best won't speak, I suppose I must, especially as Tolstoi has come to Ireland. He is a Russian Count who thinks he is sent as a savior to his people. He sympathizes with the people and wants

to lift them; and in order to do so he has gone among the *moudjiks*, that's what they call the Russian peasants, tried to live their lives, etc., etc."

He paused; but Maxwell would not be drawn.

"'Tis true," Outram continued, "that he has given up all his estates — to his wife; that he has renounced his income — that is, all of it that he doesn't possess; that he is a beggar — but lives, in a certain degree of luxury, in his wife's house in Yasnaia Poliana; that he has left house and lands and family — except in so far as he clings to them; and that he is a kind of malodorous fakir, such as I have often seen in his leprous rags on the Hooghly, except, that his wife puts a *sachet* of petal-dust under his linen in the drawer; and that under the peasant's *pelisse* is fine linen, lavendered and voluptuous with *Eau de Chypre* and Parma Violets."

Maxwell had now turned round with blazing eyes.

"That is the usual class calumny," he cried. "We heard the same here of O'Connell, of Parnell, and the rest."

"I am quoting the words of his brother-in-law, Bers," said Outram, coolly. "And all experience proves them. When you hear of all this self-renunciation and sanctity, you may be sure the hair-shirt is not worn next the skin. I, even I, should not object to take the *rôle* of prophet and reformer on Tolstoi's terms."

"You're talking rot, both of you," said an elderly man. "Any man who would preach, much more practise, such doctrines, would be promptly placed in a lunatic asylum by his friends."

"Not by any means," said Outram, with cutting sar-

casm. "There are young men in Ireland to-day who are prepared for sacrifice. I heard of one the other day, who took up a dying woman from the streets, carried her to his house, and when she was refused admission into a public hospital, nursed her at his home till she died; and who paid forty pounds a year out of a salary of sixty to send his future wife abroad to Davos Platz, till she had been cured of consumption, and then married her. And there are some of ourselves who would not hesitate a moment to go down to Kerry and dig potatoes with —"

"There! There! You're always sarcastic, Outram. You know too much of coolies and the like —"

"I assure you," said Outram, "I was never more serious in my life. The new wine has been poured into new bottles. I know men who would not shrink from the hardships of the Irish peasant's life, if they only could supply a motive for going down amongst them, such as to study their condition, to elevate them, to lift them up to a higher standard. At least," he said, as if correcting himself, "I have heard those opinions expressed. I have not seen them put in practice as yet."

"Nor are you likely, by Jove," said the other. "What? An Irish gentleman giving up house and comforts to go down amongst the farmers? Ha! ha! Well, that is a good one!"

"You consider it quite incredible?" asked Maxwell, standing up and planting his feet on the mat before the fire.

"Quite! We've all heard of the nobleman that went around the country playing a barrel-organ for a wager. It was mad enough; but it was a freak, and the fellow,

I believe, did it. But to go down to a thatched cabin, under smoky rafters, to wear frieze and hobnailed boots, to live on potatoes and buttermilk —"

"Why, I heard you say an hour ago," interrupted Maxwell, "that the farmers were better off than ourselves — that they lived better, that their wives and daughters dressed better than ours, that they had pianos and pictures, etc. If that be so, where is the great sacrifice in going amongst them and enjoying all this luxury?"

Outram laughed loud at this discomfiture, but immediately said:

"Look here, Maxwell! These fellows are giaours — infidels! Why not take up a bet like the gentleman organ-grinder? It will be hard on you, I know; but then you are full of this magnificent idea. Come! I'll wager what you please that you won't go down to Cork or Kerry and live as a peasant or labourer for twelve months, or for six, or for three!"

The gentlemen crowded around the fireplace.

"I should need a higher motive than a wretched money bet to do such a thing," said Maxwell. "I should hope that the little force, or energy, or life, whatever you call it, that the Lord has given me, might be well spent during my short sojourn here; and that there is something somewhat nobler than fox-hunting, claret-drinking, and evicting. I say that the man who will lift up his countrymen from the condition of serfdom, to which centuries of oppression and foul wrong have reduced them, would be more of a nobleman than if he had fifty crests and coats-of-arms; and if I thought I dared, or could do it, I would step down at once from the classes and join my lot with the people."

"Then, why not do so?" said Outram, watching him keenly.

"Why not?" echoed Maxwell, studying the pattern on the hearth-rug. "Why not?"

"What d ——d rot!" cried a magistrate. "By Heavens, Maxwell, if you thought of such a thing, I'd commit you to Dundrum at once."

"You don't know the stuff of which Maxwell is made!" said Outram, twirling his opal ring around his finger.

The gesture caught Maxwell's eye.

"Look here, Outram," he said. "Here's a bargain, not a bet. Give me that ring for twelve months; and for twelve months I shall go as a farm labourer into Cork or Kerry."

Outram hesitated. The other gentlemen laughed, and began to chaff him.

"A fair offer, by Jove."

"Come, Outram, are the tables turned against you?"

"'Twill be the talk of every club in Dublin to-morrow, Outram. You might as well relinquish the bauble."

Outram went over to the window, and gently disengaged the ring from his finger. He returned holding it aloft.

"You're afraid, I see, Maxwell," he said. "You don't trust the noblest peasantry in the world. You need a talisman, and you are right. Here it is! The joke is too good a one to be lost. Gentlemen, I call you as witnesses that Maxwell has engaged to go for twelve months as a farm labourer into Cork or Kerry. We'll make no conditions. We can trust his honour. If he comes back alive, he can take his revenge by writing a book."

Maxwell twisted the ring slowly on to the third finger of his right hand and then left the room.

"How do you know he'll keep his engagement?" asked one of the gentlemen of Outram. "He can evade it in a hundred ways!"

"'Tis all right," said Outram. "I know what is in his mind. He has been poisoned by reading all kinds of rubbish from Carlyle, Spencer, and the rest. There are a good many of his class in Oxford and London — Christian Socialists they call themselves; and Maxwell has an ambition to introduce something of the rot here. He'll be pretty tired of it in twelve months; and there won't be a more 'felonious landlord' in the club then."

"I heard he was engaged to Major Willoughby's daughter," said the other. "What will the lady think of this?"

"I am of opinion that Maxwell's vagaries have ceased to trouble Miss Willoughby," said Outram.

And so, indeed, it was.

CHAPTER V

A NEW HAND

No sooner had Bob Maxwell taken the plunge than he began to realize the consequences. The ideas that had been slowly germinating in his mind for years had suddenly blossomed into a flower of fancy that might be poisonous, and a fruit that would certainly be very bitter. He began to think, as he sat by his solitary fireplace, that he had made a mistake. Why should he separate himself from his class? Who called him to be a martyr for principle? Why should he alone select the heroic, which, dreadful thought! would, or might, end in the ridiculous? The age was not heroic. The age was self-centred, self-seeking, self-satisfied. Men did not understand these things nowadays. All had come down to a common level of meanness, duplicity, cunning, cruelty. No man dreamed of self-sacrifice, or the immolation of great possibilities and great hopes on the altar of Duty. The Greek spirit had vanished; the Christian spirit had followed. He alone would attempt the impossible; and come back, dubbed a Quixote, a fool, a dreamer, a failure, for the rest of his life.

And then? Maxwell was not oblivious of the hardships of the task he had assumed. He knew well what it was to sleep on coarse beds, to eat poor food, to work hard, to be exposed to the weather, and, above all, to be compelled to associate with people who had not an idea

beyond their wants, their struggles, and their trials. "Not sordid lives, but squalid lives are theirs," he thought, "and how can I participate therein?"

"And then? There's no drawing back, once the step is taken. I must pursue it to the end. And this means ostracism from my own class, suspicion from those with whom I am going to associate, union with rabid politicians, prosecutions probably, and imprisonment. Yes; the prospect is not brilliant. I am coveting a martrydom; and I mistake much the temper of that waspish, stinging, aggressive thing, called man, if he does not make me suffer."

Maxwell stood up and walked along the carpet that edged his library. This meditation had unnerved him. He felt himself shivering on the bank. He needed a tonic; and, instead of the sideboard, he sought his books. They were not far to seek; nor had he to look long, until words spoke to him, like tongues of Pentecost — great, true, flaming words, bidding him obey the God within him, and not the cackling idols of the market-place; and sternly ordering him onward on the path of Duty, no matter how tempests howled and winds raved, and pitfalls yawned, and the loud laughter of fools and knaves echoed from club and drawing-room, from newspaper or letter, from friends and foes across his way.

But failure? What matter? Everything is failure. All that the world holds of its best is writ large in failure. It is not a question of success, or non-success. It is a question of Duty — to go forward and see the end!

> "Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
> Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
> So many times among 'The Band'— to wit,

The Knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps — that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now — should I be fit?"

Every word of sage or poet, philosopher and economist in this age of greed and selfishness pointed in but one direction. It clenched the doubts of Maxwell.

Some few weeks later, a weary, drooped, travel-stained figure came slowly up the boreen that led to Owen McAuliffe's house at Lisheen. It was an autumn afternoon; and everyone about the place was in the fields, picking the potatoes and flinging them into large pits for safety against the November rains. The old woman, the vanithee, was alone in the kitchen, preparing the evening meal. A brood of chickens, clacking noisily after the maternal hen, were busy picking up from the earthen floor scraps of potatoes and grains of Indian meal. A huge collie lay coiled asleep under the kitchen table. At the noise of a strange footstep, he roused himself lazily, then suddenly assumed the defence of the place, and barked furiously at the intruder. The latter, unheeding, came slowly and painfully across the straw-covered yard, and entered the house.

A professional beggar would have said, in the country fashion: "God save you!"

And would have been answered: "God save you kindly!"

But this poor fellow sank wearily into a chair, and bowed his head between his knees. The dog ceased barking; and the old woman, coming over, said kindly:

"You're tired, me poor bhoy!"

"Tired and sick and hungry," said the man, in an

English accent. "'Tis a weary load I have taken up!"

"Well, thin," said the old woman, "you must rest here, me poor bhoy; and sure 'tis no great job to hunt away the hunger and the thirst."

Saying this, she cut a huge slice of a griddle cake, and brought it over with a porringer of milk to the wayfarer. He ate and drank eagerly, almost ravenously. It revived him, and he said in a brighter way:

"That's the only food I have had for twenty-four hours."

"Well, thin," said the old woman, "the people must be gettin' hard-hearted intirely, whin they refused a bite or sup to a dacent-looking bhoy like you."

"It wasn't their fault," said the man. "It was my own. I asked for work, work; and when that could not be had, I was ashamed to ask for bread."

"Faith, thin, you must be new to the road," said the vanithee. "Because 'tisn't much shame the travellers have nowadays!"

"I never was from home before," said the man, "and I am not accustomed to hardship. If I had known all — but there's no use in complaining! But the burden I took up was too much for my strength!"

The instinctive delicacy of the Irish mind forbade her questioning him further. She went about her household work, from time to time casting a curious glance at the visitor. He sat in the low sugan chair, and stared out through the open door in a kind of reverie, which was only broken when the two men and Debbie, well tired and dirty after the day's rough work, came in. They merely

glanced at the stranger, as they put aside their tools; but the old man said in the usual way:

"God save you!"

Maxwell, for it was he, did not know what to reply, but stood up as if to go.

"Ye needn't be in such a hurry," said the old woman. "You had a long day's tramp, an' you want a night's rest. Stay where you are for to-night; an' you'll be betther able for the road to-morrow."

Maxwell seemed to hesitate, as the men said nothing, but sat down silently to the evening meal.

"Come over, and give us a hand here," said Owen McAuliffe, pointing to the huge pile of smoking potatoes. "Maybe you could lend us a hand elsewhere to-morrow."

"Your good wife has already given me food," said Maxwell; "if you could let me have work, I would take it as a favour."

"Well, we'll thry," said Owen. "But I'm thinking that your white hand is more used to the pen than the plough.

"A hand that's willing to work can do work if it only gets fair play," answered Maxwell.

"Well said, me bhoy," replied the old man. "Well, as you won't ate, pull over the chair to the fire, and have your smoke."

Maxwell began to roll a cigarette mechanically, as he drew up the straw chair near the open hearth, and sat looking in a dazed way at the red ashes and charred timber that smouldered there. He was too tired and too dispirited to feel any interest in the place or people. He knew that it was a farmer's house of the poorer class,

such as he had seen, day by day, during the last few weeks; and the surroundings and details were not inviting. It was poverty, great poverty, accentuated by constant dread of the greater trial, that it was quite within the bounds of possibility they should lose even that.

He listened as in a dream to the slow munching of potatoes and the swilling of new milk that were going on quite close to him. He had not even curiosity enough left to watch the young daughter of the house as she busied herself on dish and platter, setting this to rights, and placing that in its place on the dresser, and tidying up, in a deft, silent manner, the table and the utensils that were soiled after the men's supper.

It was only when Owen McAuliffe came over to the hearthside, and sat on the flagged seat near the hob, and drew out his black pipe and began to smoke, that Maxwell woke up, and began to realize his position.

"You're out of a job?" said the old man after a time.

"Yes," answered Maxwell. "I've tramped half the country; but met the same answer everywhere!"

"And what would that be now?" said Owen.

"Well, they wanted hands badly; but I wouldn't do. I didn't look equal to hard work, and they had nothing light to give me."

"They needn't be so pertickler," said Owen. "The deuce a much work they'll get out of any labourer nowadays. Whin I wos a bhoy, we thought nothin' of takin' out the cart in the morning fasting, and thravelling six or seven miles to the mountain bog, and fillin' our load of turf, and comin' back agin before we sot down to brekfus. Manny and manny a time I thramped thirteen

and fourteen miles before breakin' me fast. But you won't get youngsters to do that nowadays!"

"I suppose they have not the strength or endurance!" said Maxwell.

"Thrue for you, they haven't," said the old man. "But," he continued, as the idea of driving a bargain came into his mind, "I suppose now, as you are so delicate and genteel-like, you wouldn't be expectin' high wages?"

"I expect no wages," said Maxwell, bluntly. "I have as much clothes in this valise," he pointed to a portmanteau, once very handsome, but now much the worse for wear, "as I want for twelve months, and I have no need of anything but the food and shelter every son of Adam requires."

"Well, thin," said the old man, "I won't take you at your word, for that would be dhrivin' a hard bargin, and takin' a mane advantage of you. But if you like to stay here and look about you, you can be of some little use to us maybe, an' sure, if you never did nothin', we won't begrudge you the bite and the sup."

"I'm extremely obliged to you," said Maxwell, rising up. "It's the first word of welcome I have had since I set — since I began looking for work; and you won't find me ungrateful. But I'm dead tired; and if you could show me where I might rest the night, to-morrow we could talk things over."

Here arose a little trouble, however; a trouble which had already suggested itself to the women, who had been engaged in an anxious debate over it. There were but two beds in the only room that served as parlour and bedroom — one of these was occupied by Debbie, the other

by her parents. Pierce invariably slept in the settle bed in the kitchen. Where should they put the stranger? The servant boy, when they had such, invariably slept in the loft, or in one of the outhouses; and they would have promptly relegated the newcomer to either place; but they felt, by that secret but infallible instinct that characterizes women, that this was no ordinary tramp. There was a something about him that told them how much he differed from average wayfarers. They could not dream that he was a gentleman. That was too much beyond the reach of imagination; but they concluded he was someone who had got a "let-down" in the world, and needed additional consideration.

After a good deal of debating, they decided that Pierce should sleep in the loft; and that the stranger should have the settle bed in the kitchen. The settle was a long box with a lid and two arm-rests at the extremities. It was used during the day as a seat, which might accommodate four or five persons. At night the front was let down from hinges, the lid raised, and, lo! it was a comfortable bed.

So Maxwell found it, when the family, having said the Rosary, and remained for some time afterwards in silent prayer, retired for the night, and left him alone. He sat for a few moments meditatively on the edge of the improvised bed, watching the smouldering embers on the hearth, and thinking, thinking into what a sea of trouble he had plunged himself. Then he rolled over into the blankets, and was buried at once in a deep sleep.

He woke refreshed next morning, when he heard Pierce's step on the ladder, rose rapidly, made his ablu-

tions in a primitive manner outside the door from a tin basin; and, drinking in deep draughts of the morning air, he set out with the young man to commence the day's work.

It was the same as yesterday's. Pierce opened with his strong arm and foot the drills of potatoes, and Maxwell gathered them up in creels, and tossed them into the great pits that yawned to receive them. It was not hard work, but the constant stooping over the potatoes made his back ache. He was not sorry when old Owen McAuliffe came out, and after watching the work for some time in silence and praising the potatoes for their size and dryness, bade the two young men come in to breakfast.

This consisted of tea and home-made bread and butter. The keen morning air and the exercise had sharpened Maxwell's appetite, and he was astonished at the manner in which he stowed away junk after junk of heavy, but wholesome, bread, that a month ago would have given him dyspepsia for weeks. Then, without any delay, they went back to work again; Debbie and the old man accompanying them.

Maxwell, although ashamed to idle even one moment in the company of such industrious workers, had time to look around him. He found that this farm lay on the edge of a low spur of a mountain, that stretched back black and gloomy in the gray October light. Evidently, the larger portion of the land had been reclaimed from bog and heather at the cost of infinite labour; and it was quite clear it would revert to the same condition again, if the redeeming hand of man were once lifted from it. Here and there, tufts of furze had succeeded in eluding

the vigilance of the reclaimers, and the soil was peaty — not the deep, rich brown mould of more prosperous farms. Far around, a great plain, dotted thickly with farmers' homesteads, each in its little clump of trees, stretched to where on the horizon faintly-outlined mountains bounded the view. And far to the right there shone or bickered or slept the broad expanses of the sea. The district was clearly congested; and the vast majority of farms were of about the same extent and the same character as that in which Maxwell now worked. The landscape was not inviting; but he saw, with a faint thrill of pleasure, that behind him was the black, unsurveyed mountain with all its ravines and recesses, such as those where he had often encamped above the Lakes. Here, at least, he thought, I can beat a retreat sometimes; and, alone, think over the problem I have set myself to solve.

He worked on steadily till dinner time at noon, when they were called in by Mrs. McAuliffe. He was tired, and his limbs ached from the continuous stooping; but he had a vigorous appetite. There was an immense pile of potatoes on the table before him and three porringers of milk. He saw the two men make the Sign of the Cross over the food; and then set to work with their nails to peel the potatoes. He attempted the same; but the hot potatoes burned his tender fingers, and his taste somehow revolted from the operation. Debbie saw his embarrassment, and quickly placed a black-handled knife on the table before him. But he managed to make a splendid meal. He could never have believed that potatoes and milk could be so appetizing.

They went straight from dinner to work. But Maxwell's back ached so badly that he said:

"Look here, men. I'm not shirking work; but, you know, I am not used to it; and my back is almost broken. I'll beg off for an hour or two."

"Av coorse, av coorse," said the old man. "Sthroll up the fields and take a look at the heifers. You've done enough for to-day."

The kindness touched Maxwell deeply. He passed out of the potato field, and was instantly treading under foot the purple blossoms of the heather he loved so well. The whole mountain was covered with it, except in a few patches here and there, where lean cattle were feeding. He went up and up, until he almost reached the chine of the hill. He then sat down on a deep purple bed of fragrant heather, smoked leisurely, and leisurely looked out over the country, and leisurely considered how far further he could carry out the unweaving of the great problem he had so rashly undertaken to solve.

Meanwhile the good folks amongst whom he was now thrown were busy conjecturing the history, position, and future of their strange visitor. All kinds of clever speculations ran in their heads to account for such a singular apparition among them. But the final conclusion at which the men arrived was, that Maxwell was a deserter from the army and on the run. This view Debbie strenuously contradicted. Her woman's wit saw farther than masculine reasoning. She knew that there was something about Maxwell that was quite irreconcilable with the idea that he was, or had been, a common soldier, and she was strengthened in her conviction by watching and

noticing his linen, which was of an altogether superior kind. But what he was, how his fates had led him hither, she could not conjecture. He was a mystery; and it increased tenfold the interest that surrounded him. Then once the idea struck her that he was a criminal on the run from justice, who was diving into all kinds of holes and corners to escape the Argus eyes of the law. It lessened her interest in him, although she tried to banish the thought and invest him with the dignity of a gentleman in disguise.

CHAPTER VI

"IN THE SWEAT OF THY BROW"

THE next few days were days of monotonous labour for Maxwell. To rise at six, be at work at half-past six, to breakfast at eight o'clock, dine at twelve, and sup at seven, filling in the intervals with steady, unremitting toil, this was each day's programme. To lessen, or rather to vary his employment, he was asked to take a spade and dig the lumpers out of the drills. He tried, but found this as hard work as picking them up and filling the creels. And, unfortunately, he sliced with the sharp edge of the spade so many potatoes that the old man said:

"This isn't the time for *skeolans*,[1] me boy. You'll be a great hand intirely when we're settin' the praties in the spring."

At last he was allowed free play to do what he liked about the farm. It was quite clear he was not equal to much hard work; and as there was no stipulation about wages, and he seemed willing to be useful, he was invited to do as he pleased.

"'Tis wonderful," said the old man, "how handy thim sojers are. They're thrained to everythin' a'most."

"You'll find he's no sojer," said Debbie, almost sulkily.

"Wisha, what else could he be?" said her father.

[1] Potatoes sliced in quarters or halves for seed.

"Shure, he won't tell his name even; and he wanted to know how far away were the police!"

"Well, 'tis no business of ours, I suppose," said Debbie, "but he's no desarter, whatever else he is."

"You'll see how handy he is about horses," replied her father, clinging to his idea. "I saw him watchin' the chestnut yesterday; and, faix, he seemed to know the pints of a horse as well as Sims of Thralee."

"Well, he's quiet and asy-spoken enough," said Pierry. "An' for a bhoy who made no bargain about wages, he seems anxious enough for the work."

On the whole, these were favourable opinions enough about our young nonconformist, who had essayed a trying task, and was sinking beneath the burden, when a sudden inspiration loomed up on his imagination from some far, invisible depths, and turned his cloud of despair into a pillar glowing with the fire and light of hope and great promise.

It was on a Sunday morning a week or two after his introduction to this humble family, when he lay on a bed of grass and heather up there on the breast of the black mountain of Croughna-Cree. The family had gone to Mass three miles away; and although it was the custom for one to remain at home to guard the house and premises, they committed the care of the place, with singular confidence, to Maxwell. Pierry had volunteered to stay at home. He was the doubting Thomas. He thought it singularly imprudent to leave the whole place in the hands of a perfect stranger, and one with the possibly evil record of a deserter from the army. Debbie had again insisted that Maxwell was nothing of the kind; and, as it was

broadly hinted that Pierry's devotion was so tenuous that he only sought an excuse for remaining away from Mass, his pride was stung, and he cried:

"Very well! But the throuble be on yereselves and not on me!"

And so Maxwell, who, it was charitably surmised, "had no religion," was allowed to assume control of Lisheen for two or three hours on that Sunday.

"You needn't stick yourself in the kitchen," said the old man, going out. "Take the kay in your pocket, and lave Snap loose; and you can go up and see after the heifers, and keep thim blagard crows away from the drills."

So Maxwell went up into the mountains, like any prophet of the Lord, to think earnestly, and listen, if so it might be, to any voices from within or without, that would speak to him, and point out the way in which he should walk. For he felt, in spite of deep heart-sinkings and doubts, that he had assumed a certain noble and spiritual calling, far, far removed from the petrified uniformity of an existence which his class traditions and teachings would have marked out for him, but which he now regarded with a certain loathing that became almost physical in its intensity. For he began to reflect, there in the autumnal afternoon, on the fearful waste of time and life that would have been his inevitable lot had he remained amongst his class, and followed its traditions. "Parasites," he thought, "fattening on the vitals of a race that could not shake them aside, drawing a life-sustenance and a pleasure-sustenance from starving wretches, who had to labour night and day to ward off starvation! Drones

in a busy beehive, eating a honey that they did not make, and drinking a nectar they did not distil! Plutocrats, not aristocrats — they would shame the name — for who are the best, but they who, consecrated to great work, draw out the slender threads and filaments of life, and weave them into noble textures and tapestries for their race?"

And then his thoughts turned suddenly downwards to these toiling and labouring serfs, and he thought how noble, amidst their perpetual poverty, were their laborious and austere lives. Even from a purely physical standpoint, he felt ashamed of himself. He had been an athlete in Trinity, winning prizes at the College sports, until the doctors had warned him aside; and see how swiftly he collapsed when a little daily toil was placed on his shoulders. And these peasants! How easily, how smoothly, how deftly, they plied hand and nerve and sinew and muscle from dawn to dark, never tired, never fatigued, their whole physical system moving rhythmically at the divine call of labour. He had noticed how firm were their muscles, how broad their wrists, and how the muscles and tendons seemed to strain with the strength of whip-cord when unusual pressure was placed on them. And how beautifully clean they were! Not a single scab or speck on their spotless skins. Not a trace of dust or dandriff in their hair. Their hands were hardened and enamelled by toil, their bodies were washed in sweat; but they were kept sweet and wholesome and fragrant by that daily ablution, by the free play of the pure mountain air, and the immaculate sanctity of their lives. Compared with many whom he had known, that peasant boy was "Hyperion to a Satyr"; and compared even with Queen

Mab, that mountain girl was an Amazon of health and generous vitality. "Blessed is work!" thought Maxwell. "Blessed is the sentence: 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou labour all the days of thy life!'"

But — and then his heart sank within him — what chance had he to compete with these athletes of Nature, and take up duties now, to which he should have been indurated from childhood? How can the poodle run with the greyhound; or the sloth wrestle with the lion? Nay; it was madness! He should have kept to his own class, lived as they did, and died as they did! No, no; that will never do. He cannot admit the ignoble thought. He has set out on a mission, and he must accomplish it. But how? His cardinal principle was to get a fulcrum within the lives of these peasants, wherewith to raise them, and place them on some higher plane. But, supposing they were already on a plane higher than his own, and in the physical department they certainly were, what then? He dared not touch the spiritual; and what remained? The answer was, the social and intellectual life of the people, the sweetness and the light, that would help them to bear with greater equanimity the inequalities of life, and the hardships incident to their condition. But how? This seems an impossibility. He has undertaken a Herculean task, without the strength of Hercules. And he shall be defeated. And then, he must go back to his own tribe to be for evermore a butt and a jest for his Quixotism. See Tolstoi, his patron saint, is laughed at, his motives misinterpreted, his self-denial contradicted, his theories ridiculed. He will go down to posterity as a madman, a voluptuary masquerading under the guise of a martyr,

a teacher of principles he dared not practise — an idealist, carrying his sparks of inspiration into a powder-magazine, a fool to be hoisted with his own petard! And thou, thou, here in this Irish *Nebelwelt,* thou shalt be the prophet and pioneer? No; only the *Erzträumer* — the Arch-Dreamer! Then the flash of illumination came.

"At least I have sacrificed myself for an idea. If I cannot be the salt of savour to others, at least I myself shall ñot rot."

He went down from the mountain. The family had come back, all but Debbie, who had lingered behind talking with the neighbours. The old woman was bending over the huge pot that hung from the black iron framework above the hearth. She was stirring up a great savoury mess of pork and cabbage, whilst in another pot the potatoes were simmering. The men, father and son, were conversing in the yard. The young man, slightly rebellious against circumstances, was making angry comments on the sermon. Two others, neighbours, were listening.

"I can't stand this," said Pierry. "'Tis all patience! patience! and thrust in God. Betther for us thrust in our own right arrums. 'The blackest hour is before the dawn!' Thin, the dawn must be near, because the hour is black enough now! Why don't the prieshts lade us? Why don't they tell us: Rise up like min, and don't lie undher like whipped puppies —?"

"Because they see farther than you," said his father. "They have the ejucation that you haven't; and they have the Sperrit of God guidin' them."

"Begobs, thin," said Pierry, "I wish to God they'd see

as far as to-morrow; and tell us what we are to do, whin these — bailiffs are upon us."

"Lave to-morrow look out for itself," said the old man. "God will be there to-morrow as well as to-day."

"A piece of lead, an' a grain of powdher —" said Pierry, but his father whispered: "Whist!" as Maxwell came into the yard.

The latter noticed the sudden silence, but said nothing. The three young men slunk silently away. The old man said:

"Nothin' unusual turned up, I suppose?"

"Nothing," said Maxwell, who was somewhat disturbed by the apparent suspicion with which he was regarded.

"You said your own prayers in your own way, I suppose?" said the old man.

"I thought a good deal," said Maxwell. "Sometimes, thinking is praying."

"Thrue for you," said the old man. "Just as I suppose working is praying, as the priesht sometimes tell us!"

"And your priest is right," said Maxwell, earnestly. "The old monks have left the motto, *Laborare est orare*, to labour is to pray!"

They sat down to the Sunday dinner. Pierry's absence was not noticed. On Sundays young men went away from home very often to a hurling match, or a dance, and took pot-luck with the neighbours. The meal proceeded in silence; the old man was sunk in his own reflections, Maxwell was disturbed. Clearly, from what he had heard when he came into the yard, he was amongst these people, but not of them. They were evidently in trouble, and they could not confide in him. He had no right to com-

plain, of course, but if this barrier of distrust was not broken down, his mission would remain unfulfilled. And yet he was in a new country; and a single false step would, he knew, be fatal. It was a sudden problem, and Maxwell had experience enough to know that he must not be precipitate. And yet the question would force itself upon him; should he await the development of events, or anticipate them by inquiries? Prudence pointed to the first course. But, as he silently ate his dinner, he reflected: These people took me in, a stranger, broke bread with me, made no hard stipulation with me; a great cloud is looming over them, and I —

He pushed aside the plate and porringer, and said, with a steady gaze at the old man:

"You're in trouble, I understand!"

The old man started a little, laid down his knife and fork, and said hesitatingly:

"A little. Sure, we're always in throuble, welcome be the will of God."

The mother, sitting by the hearth, coughed slightly. Debbie looked anxious.

"I have no right," said Maxwell, "to intrude upon your secrets; but if I can help you in any way, you may command me."

"We're much obliged to you," said Owen McAuliffe. "But sure, we've no right to put our throubles upon sthrange shoulders —"

"I might be able to see farther than you," said Maxwell, who was now very anxious to help these poor people. "I've seen a bit of the world, and had some experience of trouble myself."

"Well, thin, you're young to have throuble," said the old man. "But sure there can be no harrum in telling you what all the parish knows. We owe a year's rent, an' haven't the manes to pay it. The agent has took out a decree aginst us; and we don't know the minute the bailiffs will be upon us and seize all we have."

"That's hard lines," said Maxwell, sympathetically. "But what do you propose to do?"

"There's the throuble," said the old man, anxiously. "Pierry and the bhoys wants to meet the bailiffs wanst and forever and have it out wid them —"

"You mean to resist?" asked Maxwell, anxiously.

"Yes; to fight it out wid them; and let the case go before the counthry."

"That means bloodshed and imprisonment," said Maxwell.

"Yes; and thin — av coorse, Pierry won't shtay in the counthry. He'll go to America, whin he comes out of gacl!"

This looked bad. It meant heavy trial on this poor family, and the final disruption of their home. Maxwell leaned his head on his hand, and began to think. After some time, he asked anxiously:

"Is there no alternative? I mean, can nothing else be done?"

"Nothing," said the old man, "except to clear the farm."

"You mean to remove the cattle and everything else that might be saleable?"

"Yes; that's just it. And that's what we want, as it is the aisiest way out of the throuble."

"But then they'll evict you," said Maxwell.

"No," said the old man. "Because, if they did, they'd lose everythin' as well as we ourselves."

"And why not clear the farm then, as you say? It will stop bloodshed, and avert serious trouble from your home."

"Thrue for you, but Pierry and the bhoys won't have it. They want to have it out wanst and forever."

Here was a difficulty that put Maxwell at his wits' ends to solve. Ruin was before this poor family — absolute, irretrievable ruin. He felt deeply for them. The great problem of the land was presented to his eyes naked to be solved. And he saw that his own little programme would come to a summary end with the ruin of this little household. He could not commence to work out the problem elsewhere again.

After a long pause he said:

"By the way, how much is due? What will satisfy the agent?"

"We owe him twelve pounds," said the old man. "I carried in seven pounds to Thralee to him. 'Twas all I could gather. I axed him lave us alone till we sould the hay and the handful of oats. He thrun the seven notes in me face, and the nixt day I had an attorney's letter, with costs. I wouldn't mind," he continued, "but we lost a couple of calves in the spring; and a young colt, which we expected would make the rint for us."

"Look here," said Maxwell with sudden determination, "we must prevent violence at any cost. Where is Pierry?"

"Gone down to the dance, or perhaps to the forge to gather the bhoys for the morning," replied the old man.

"Then you and I will clear the farm," said Maxwell.

"Begobs, you're a man," said the old man, enthusiastically, and the mother said: "God bless you!" and Debbie said nothing, but looked as if a great load were lifted off her mind.

"But —" said the old man, lingering.

"What?" said Maxwell.

"This is a Sunday," was the reply, "and maybe you wouldn't like workin' on a Sunday?"

"No matter," said Maxwell. "If we are breaking one law, we might as well break another, though it will be easier to get pardon from above."

"An' sure 'tis a good work, an' it may prevint murder," said the old man.

"Come!" said Maxwell. "There's no time to lose. Pierry will be back before dark; and we must have finished before he returns. What shall I take, and where shall I go?"

"The aisiest job for you," said Owen McAuliffe, "would be to drive the two heifers up the mountains into the glin where Mike Ahern's cattle are. They are as like as two pins; and nobody but Mike himself will know them asunder."

"And you can trust him?" said Maxwell.

"Oyeh, thrust Mike Ahern? As my own brother," replied the old man.

And Maxwell set out to break the Sabbath, and the law of the land at the same time.

CHAPTER VII

IMMEMOR SUI

"If any one had told me a few weeks ago," thought Bob Maxwell, as he trudged up the hill toward the field where the heifers were feeding, "that I, Robert Maxwell, Esq., gentleman and landlord, would be engaged this Sunday afternoon in violating British law, and upsetting British order, by frustrating the execution of her Majesty's writ, I should have deemed him a madman. In the eyes of the law, I am about to do a most unjustifiable thing; in the light of conscience, a deed that is praiseworthy. Which is right? Or are both? Is the law justice, or shall justice be the law?"

But the die was cast. He drove the heifers out of the little valley where they were feeding, out through the broken fence, and on to the high-road that led up to the mountain. He had only a rough furze root in his hand, and he shouted Ho! Ho! Yeho! Yeho! as he had heard the boys shouting from time to time. There was a distance of about three miles up along the mountain road to the glen where Mike Ahern's cottage nestled; and, as the night sank early, Maxwell was anxious to push along rapidly, and get home before nightfall. He had accomplished the greater part of his journey, and was whistling softly to himself, when suddenly two men stepped out upon the road from behind a clump of furze, and per-

emptorily challenged him. They were rough, strong men, and clad in a manner that showed Maxwell at once that they did not belong to the farmer or labouring class. One of them struck the heifers lightly with a switch, and the animals swerved back into the ditch, as the fellow said:

"Hello! young man, where are you taking these heifers?"

Maxwell's temper had instantly risen; and he said angrily:

"That's my business. Who are you that attempt to stop me on the Queen's highway?"

Something in his air of determination and his peculiar accent struck the man, for he said:

"We are here in the name of the law. Whose cattle are these; and where are you taking them?"

"The cattle are mine so long as they are in my possession," said Maxwell. "Where I am taking them is my own affair. Allow me to pass, please, or take the consequences of an illegal seizure and arrest."

This unexpected style of address caused the men to fall back and consult together. Maxwell took advantage of the indecision; and striking the animals to get them out of the dyke, he shouted again Ho! Ho! Yeho! and proceeded on his way all the more expeditiously, because he guessed at once they were either the bailiffs, who were expected next morning, or spies sent to report whether the cattle had been removed. As there was no police escort, he rightly conjectured that they did not mean business that evening. In an hour he had reached the crest of the hills, and was looking down into the glen, where, scattered here and there across the darkening

fields, Mike Ahern's cattle were feeding. He drove his own heifers up to the door of the cabin, and announced his mission.

"*Bannacht lath!*" said Mike Ahern, coming out from the dark, smoky recesses of the cabin. "So you dodged the bailiffs, gossoon. Come in! Come in! 'Twas as good as a play!"

"What? What do you mean?" said Maxwell, puzzled. "Surely, none of you were there?"

"Oh! begobs, we wor," was the reply, "and ready to lind a helpin' hand if you wanted it. But, begor, you didn't. They thought 'twas the Lord Lieutenant himself that wos shpakin' to them. Won't they be mad with thimsel's to-morrow morning. But come in, come in, an' take sumthin' agin the road."

Bob Maxwell declined the whisky that was offered him, but asked for milk, which was freely given. He drank standing, but this was considered incompatible with hospitality, so he had to sit down, and accept the delighted admiration of the family, and the many neighbours who had been hovering around the place all the evening in expectation of a scene with the bailiffs.

Mike Ahern, who prided himself on being a skilful diplomatist, and who was universally reputed as a very "knowledgeable man," did not allude further to the evening's escapade; but fell back, like a wise man, on generalities.

"Well, now," said he, as Maxwell sat contentedly with the porringer in his hand, "an' how do ye like the counthry?"

"Very well," said Maxwell, cheerfully. "I like the country and I like the people."

"Wisha, 'tis a poor counthry," said Mike Ahern, tentatively.

"Poverty and riches are only two forms of necessity," said Maxwell.

Mike Ahern looked puzzled and scratched his head; but he murmured:

"That's thrue for you, begor!"

"I mean," said Maxwell, mercifully, "that the poor man wants a little; the rich man a good deal; and, you know, the more you want the poorer you are! Therefore, a rich man is only another name for a poor man."

This was a logical thesis that puzzled his audience considerably. But he was in excellent humour, as any man should be who is surrounded by an admiring crowd, so he condescended to explain.

"What would you call a rich man, now?" he asked, addressing Mike Ahern.

"A rich man?" said Mike, alarmed. "Begobs, that depinds!"

"So it does," replied Maxwell. "But I suppose you'd call a man rich that would have, say, a hundred thousand pounds?"

"Oh, Lord!" said Mike Ahern. "Faix, an' I would, or half, or quarter, or a tinth of it. Tare an' 'ouns, man, a — hundred — thousand — pounds!"

"Well, I call him 'poor,' " said Maxwell, calmly. "Because there never yet was a man that had a hundred thousand pounds that did not want a hundred thousand more. And a man that wants a hundred thousand pounds is a poor man, isn't he?"

"Faith, I suppose he is!" said Mike Ahern, dubiously.

"But to come down lower," said Bob Maxwell, entering into the fun of the thing. "Would you call yourself a poor man?"

"Begor, whatever I call meself, or any wan else, I am poor enough, God knows!"

"And yet," said Maxwell, "if you had a hundred pounds in the bank at Tralee, you'd be poorer still."

"Would I, though?" said Mike Ahern, with a wink around the circle. "That's the divil's own quare thing entirely. Thry me with it, and you'll see."

"Well," said Maxwell. "Here is how the matter stands. How do you sleep now?"

"Divil a betther," said Mike Ahern. "From the minute I puts me head on the pillow a cannon ball wouldn't wake me!"

"And how is the appetite?" said Maxwell.

"Divil a betther," said Mike Ahern. "Ax herself or Anstie there, an' they'll tell you."

"Oh, begor, that's thrue, whatever," said Mrs. Ahern. "There are times when he'd ate the paving stones."

"Very good," said Maxwell. "Now, if you had a hundred pounds in the bank, you'd never sleep or eat again; and you might as well have as much tissue paper as bank notes, for all the good they'd do you!"

"Yerra, stop your codraulin'," said Mike Ahern. "Why shouldn't I shleep and ate, wid me rint safe and sound in the bank?"

"Because you'd be thinking every minute of the night and day that the bank would break and ruin you; or that the manager would run away with your little deposit; or that a thief would break in and rob you. Then the

missus would want a new gown and Anstie a new hat; and the neighbours would want to borrow a little from you to ease your burden; and you'd never have a moment's rest, night or day, until you became a poor man, that is, a rich man again, that is, until you had little and wanted nothing."

There was a titter amongst the boys at Mike's expense; so he turned the conversation.

"Well, I suppose you had not much to spare in the army, whatever," he said. "Poor sojers can't spare much on a shilling a day!"

Maxwell was thunderstruck. The sudden revelation disconcerted him considerably. Here, then, was the estimate formed of him by these people — a discharged soldier, or worse. He looked frightened, but the old man, seeing it, came to his relief.

"Wisha, you needn't be put about, me poor bhoy, by what I said. Your secret is as safe wid us as wid yerself. If the peelers are waitin' to hear from us, they'll wait a long time."

Maxwell was too puzzled to say anything. Mike Ahern came to his relief again.

"I suppose now whin you go into battle you're afraid-like — I mane most min are afraid?"

"Yes," said Maxwell, slowly regaining speech. He raised his eyes and looked around and saw something that made him quite determined to humour the fancy as long as he could. It was nothing more than a few rough boards leaning on a nail against the wall, and containing a few tattered books. In the dim light he made out the one word, "Shakespeare," and his heart leaped

with joy. For, amidst all the causes of depression that assailed him in his new life, the worst was the lack of all intellectual exercise or pleasure. Reading had been the mainstay of his life in city and camp. It had become a necesssity of existence. And much as he felt the loneliness and the poverty and the dismal surroundings of his new life, he thought he could bear up against the terrible depression, if only he could fly sometimes from the torture of his own thoughts and go out into those delightful realms of fancy created by the masters of poetry and fiction for the benefit of the race. A hundred times he was tempted to ask Pierry to beg a loan of a few books from the priest — the only one within miles who would be likely to possess any. But he shrank in shyness from making such a request, and had his soul starved in consequence. Now, unexpectedly, he had lighted on a treasure, and his eyes shone with delight, like those of a thrice-disappointed miner who has just seen beneath the dull brown earth the gleam of hidden gold.

"Yes," he replied to Mike Ahearn's question, "that's true. No man, no matter how brave, hears the bullets whistle round him for the first time without fear and shrinking. Then the temper rises when one begins to think that over there are fellows who want to murder him. And then he becomes mad, mad, and he wants to kill, kill, everybody and everything."

The young men understood him well. They were of the fighting race — the knights of the spade and sword.

"Men are strange beings," continued Maxwell, soliloquizing. "Just as you have often seen a horse, especially at night, start at shadows and tremble all over and shake

and become white with sweat, where the rider sees nothing; and then at another time, without any apparent cause, will take the bit between his teeth and pull to the devil, so it is with men. We are always starting at shadows, and then driving mad to ruin and destruction."

"What you say about the horses is thrue, whatever," said one of the young men. "I see you wor a dragoon, or else you could never have known them so well. But min don't start and sweat at shaddas!"

"Don't they?" said Maxwell, turning around, and facing his interlocutor, who sat back amidst a group upon the settle. "I bet you a pipe of tobacco, that I'll make you shiver and tremble, like a girl, before ten minutes."

"Begobs, thin, you couldn't," said the young fellow, completely misunderstanding Maxwell, and standing up to divest himself of his coat for a fight, "nor a betther man den you. Come on, you d——d desarter, an' lemme see you do it!"

The others tried to pull the fellow back into the seat, and to calm him, but it was no easy task.

"No, no; I wo' not be quiet," he said, struggling against them, "didn't the fellow say he'd make me thrimble before him. D—— him, I often bate a betther man than him. Let him come on now, or come out into the haggart, where the wimmin won't be frickened! No, no; I won't sit down, till I have it out wid him."

Maxwell himself was amazed, and even frightened. He had excellent nerves, but they began to sink under the new and utterly strange circumstances in which he found himself.

"You misunderstand me, my dear fellow," he said, rising up. "I didn't mean that. Put on your coat."

"Oh, you didn't mane that, you didn't," sneered the other. "Of course you didn't, not you. Well, would you be plazed to tell the company what you did mane, whin you said you could best me?"

"I never said I could best you," said Maxwell, meekly. "What I meant was to show you how easily we are influenced, so that I can make any of you laugh or cry, get frightened or angry, in a few minutes, and merely by word of mouth. Which will you have first," he continued, with a gaiety he did not feel, "the laugh or the fright?"

"Begor," said Mike Ahern, "like the man that was invited to taste the tay or the whishky, and thought he'd take the whishky whilst they wor makin' the tay, we'll have the fright over first, that we may get our night's rest afther."

"He may go on, but he's not goin' to fricken me," said the young man who thought he was challenged.

"Then, hand me down that book," said Maxwell, pointing to the blackened and tattered Shakespeare.

But here commenced another painful scene. For just as Mike Ahern was stretching his hand towards the book, his wife, a middle-aged, sorrow-stricken woman, began to rock herself to and fro, on the sugan chair where she was sitting, and to moan out, as she clasped and reclasped her hands before her;

"Oh, vo! vo! oh! mavrone! mavrone! to think of you, to-night, me darlin' bhoy, away from me, your mother, an' I here alone, alone! Oh, don't tetch 'em! don't tetch 'em, me poor bhoy's books, that he loved in his heart of hearts! Oh, lave 'em alone! lave 'em alone! Didn't I

promise him that no hand but his should titch 'em tell he come back, me fair-haired bhoy —?"

It was the old, old story in Ireland. The darling son, the flower of the flock, the sunny, bright-haired boy, who had no taste for sports or fun, but only for the books and his prayers; set apart for Levitical purposes, the one overwhelming ambition of the Irish mother; sent to college out of the scrapings and economies of the humble household; coming back on his holidays, the light of his mother's eyes; then, suddenly disappearing, as if swallowed up in a mighty storm of anguish; and leaving behind him a terrible memory of shattered hopes, disappointed ambitions, and the stern judgment of silence on the hearth he had desecrated, except for those eternal echoes of maternal love, that no ban or judgment, public or private, could ever stifle or extinguish. It was no alleviation of her misery to learn that her boy, deeming himself unsuited to the ecclesiastical state, had gone to New York, and was now a successful journalist on one of the leading papers; that he had a salary of ten pounds a week, and was reputed a man who might rise to the highest departments in his profession. She would rather see him a young curate in the remotest chapel on the Kerry mountains, or down where the Atlantic surges beat against the beehive cells of ancient monks and hermits — anywhere, anywhere, provided she could see him in the priest's vestments at the altar of God.

"Wisha, shure, he can't do any harrum," said Mike Ahern to the wife who still continued rocking herself to and fro on the chair, and clasping and unclasping her hands, and moaning. "Sure, he's not going to run away

wid 'em. Here, bhoy,take the book, an' see what you can make of it."

But Maxwell's nerves were now too shaken; and he excused himself. A strange fear had come down upon his soul. The weird place, hidden away in mountain solitudes, the high winds that forever moaned and wailed about the valleys, the darkness of the cabin, lighted only by the turf and wood fire, which cast vast, uncanny shadows on the walls and up against the blackened thatch and the rafters that were ebonized by years of smoke, the wild faces all around, reddened by the fire whilst all else was blind and black in the shadow; the anger of the young man, who, without the slightest provocation, wanted to pick a quarrel; the secrecy with which, as they had confessed, they had watched him coming up the mountain side; and lastly, the sudden emotion of the gray-haired woman by the fire — all combined to remind Maxwell that he was in strange and perhaps perilous circumstances of life; and brought to his memory one parting word of Outram's: "You are afraid, Maxwell. You don't trust the noblest peasantry in the world. You need a talisman!"

He tried to shake it off, but in vain. Then he thought he had been led into a horrid trap by the very family with which he had been living in such amity during the last few weeks. Perhaps, after all, the old suspicion was right; and that he had betrayed himself into surroundings of extreme peril. All that he had ever heard of the bloodthirstiness of the peasantry, of their hatred of landlords, of their disregard for human life, came back to him: and one only thought took possession of him — how to

get away from such uncanny people, and get back to civilization once more.

He took the ring that Outram had given him from his pocket, and put it quietly on his little finger. In the dark atmosphere it began to smoke and emit flames. He put his hand over his head, and stroked down his hair, so that all might see the talisman. They were very soon as frightened as himself, and Mike Ahern, thrusting the "Shakespeare" into his hands, said tremulously:

"Here, sure, if that's what you want, 'tis aisily settled. But I'm thinkin' we'll put off the fright and the laugh to some other time."

Maxwell took the book; but with great courtesy he stooped over and held it out towards the poor mother:

"I'll bring it back to you safe as I got it," he said. "Only let me have it for a few days."

The terrible ring flamed under her eyes; and she turned away.

"Oh, take it! take it! in the Name of God," she said, "and go away. I knew the divil had somethin' to say to you, whin I saw you comin' into the house."

Maxwell accepted the compliment, and with an affected gaiety, he said: "Good-night, lads!" and went down along the mountain road to his home.

CHAPTER VIII

BROKEN CORDS

Was Maxwell missed from Dublin society? Not in the least. His landlord friends had departed, each down to his own mansion by moor, or mountain, or sea, and had forgotten all about him. Once or twice his Quixotic ideas about property and tenants were alluded to as a joke in the Dublin club, and then dropped suddenly.

In the more gentle social life, too, the life that runs its pleasant course through steady rounds of balls and parties, over smooth-shaven tennis-lawns and polished floors, to the accompaniment of military bands or famous violinists, his name was never mentioned. The truth is that Bob Maxwell had been more or less of a recluse, and had had a decided aversion to the frivolities of life, mingling with the throng just because there was a certain silent law compelling him; but unsympathetic, and, if he dared confess it, somewhat contemptuous and pitying. He was amongst them, but not of them. They knew it; and they gave him back indifference for indifference.

In one place alone he was remembered — remembered with angry affection and resentful scorn. Old Major Willoughby was connected with Maxwell by marriage; but there was a closer bond in the intimacy, or rather the close friendship, that had subsisted, since they were young subalterns, between himself and Bob Maxwell's father.

Men who have messed together in their adolescence, who have been sundered by the War office, who have again met and fought, side by side, against Pathan or Afghan, who have camped out together in Himalayan snows, and have ridden, neck to neck, over ploughed fields in Ireland, are not likely to view each other coldly, or through the wrappings of social *convenances*. And when Maxwell's father died, leaving an only son, heir to large estates, it was the darling hope of the old Major's life, to see the son of his old friend and his own beloved daughter happily married in the enjoyment of their joint estates. Hence there was a tacit engagement, prolonged only because the Dublin doctors had some suspicion of Maxwell's health; and the latter was slow, through a sense of honour, in assuming responsibilities until he was assured he was qualified to discharge them. Hence, there were many discrepancies and disagreements amongst the young people during this protracted engagement; and these grew more intense and embittered as each began to perceive that their dispositions hardly suited. During their stay at Caragh Lake the conviction had dawned into certainty that neither in taste nor temper were they suited to draw the chariot of life together; and they had parted without any formal relinquishment or rupture of their engagement, and yet with the understanding, unspoken but understood, that all question of marriage was at end between them. On his part, this sundering of such close ties was taken with an equanimity that would have been singular, and even unnatural, but that he had always regarded their engagement as a something artificial, and made to suit the whims of others; and, as we have seen, his thoughts had taken a

higher range along summits whose austere sublimities frowned down upon the felicities of happy hearths and households. On her part, she was little loth to break an engagement with one whose health was imperfect, and whose sympathies swept beyond the minor affections and attentions, where women place their destinies with their hearts. And when a new and more sympathetic figure came into her life, in the person of Ralph Outram, who, belonging more to the nether world, could yet touch her maiden fancies with dream-pictures of Indian life, savage and picturesque, military and native, squalid and sublime, but above all mysterious and occult as the predictions of Sybils, or the rites of some Eleusis, she gladly abandoned an engagement that could only be fraught with disappointment, and went over to a newer and more human life, which instinct and reason told her would be more helpful to her happiness and peace.

But, if this pleased Mabel Willoughby, it did not suit the plans and ambitions of her father. At first, he found it impossible to believe that the dream of his life was at an end, and that all his happy arrangements were silently frustrated. He had been used to command, and to be obeyed. He could not understand disobedience or resistance. He also considered that he had as much right to exact obedience from Maxwell as from Mabel; and when he found that suddenly all his delightful plans were frustrated, he raged equally against both.

"'Tis all d——d rot," he said one morning to his daughter, after a stormy scene, now, alas! of frequent occurrence between them, "to tell me that Bob has gone away through some confounded fad or another. Bob

was too level-headed for that kind of thing. 'Twas you yourself, with your confounded whims and nonsense, drove the boy away."

"I don't wish to argue the matter further," she said, with a certain kind of coldness that could hardly be called sarcasm. "I have only to repeat that there was no scene, no rupture between Mr. Maxwell and myself; and that, so report goes, he has embarked on a foolish enterprise, where it would be idle and degrading to follow him."

"I don't believe one word of it," said the Major. "'Tis that confounded Indian fellow — that nabob, or rajah, or something — who has spread the report for some vile purpose of his own. I say, Mabel, beware of that fellow. I don't like him; and we know nothing of him."

"Except," said Mabel, "that he has been now appointed aide-de-camp to the Viceroy, and has got his C. B."

"What? What?" said the Major. "Then the fellow is somebody after all. Well, no matter. Bob Maxwell for me. Old friends, old books, old wine for me. See here, Mabel, get me at once pen and paper. I'll put an advertisement first in the *Irish Times*, and if that fails to fetch him, by the Lord, I'll put him in the *Hue and Cry*, and get him arrested."

Mabel dutifully brought pen and paper to her irascible father; and he spent half the day concocting a notice for the *Irish Times*. These were some of the specimens, which, however, never reached the dignity of print.

"MISSING. — Young gentleman; aged thirty; hair brown; eyes — What kind of eyes had Bob, Mabel?"

"I hardly know, I'm sure," said Mabel. "Say — hazel. It means anything and everything!"

"— Hazel; height about five feet ten inches (it may be an inch or two more); call him 'Bob' suddenly, and he will reveal himself. If any one should find him, correspond with Major Willoughby, late-1st Dragoon Guards, Dalmeny, Dublin."

"There," said the Major, after reading it aloud for his daughter. "That'll fetch him!"

"I wouldn't insert that if I were you," said his daughter.

"Why? Why?" said the Major.

"Because you will make yourself the laughing-stock of every mess and club in Dublin," said Mabel.

"Why? Why? What the devil have I said?" said the Major. "Isn't it plain as a pikestaff?"

"Too plain," said Mabel.

And her father tossed the paper into the fire. Later in the day, after much cogitation, he wrote: "If Robert Maxwell will return from his foolish and absurd expedition, and come back to his friends, all will be forgiven and forgotten."

This, too, after a similar scene, passed into the fire.

Later on he wrote:

"If any member of the R. I. C. or the military in the counties of Cork, or Kerry, or Limerick, have any information or tidings about a young gentleman, who is roaming around the country in disguise, he will receive a handsome reward by communicating such intelligence to Major Willoughby, Dalmeny, Dublin."

This was an after-lunch composition; and the Major read it over nearly a hundred times. When Mabel came in to tea the Major read it to her. He looked at her wistfully.

"'Tis better," she said coolly, "than the other compositions. But I should say it would be wiser to have your intelligence or information sent to 'Major, this office.'"

"That's an anonymous business," said the Major. "I hate that kind of thing. I'm not ashamed of my name, Mabel."

"N — no"; she said slowly, throwing her hat and jacket on a sofa. "But I shouldn't like to be exposed to ridicule just now."

"Ridicule? Just now?" echoed the Major.

"Yes," said Mabel, going over and arranging her hair before a mantel mirror. "The subject is one that is causing some merriment in society; and — ah! — I — well, Mr. Outram mightn't like it!"

"Mr. Outram?" said the Major, flaring up. "Mr. Outram! And who the devil cares what Mr. Outram likes, or dislikes?"

"Why, I, for one, care a good deal," said his daughter, coming over and calmly pouring out some tea.

"You?" said the Major, growing pale with apprehension.

"Yes," said Mabel. "*Mr. Outram and I are engaged!*"

At the sudden and awful revelation the Major was struck dumb. He stared at the cool, supercilious face of his daughter, whilst a tornado of impetuous language swept through his mind, and would have escaped his lips, but for that 'cruelly meek' expression, that bade him beware, for he was no match for a woman. The quiet way in which she had conquered; her cold, passionless manner in announcing her engagement to a man whom she knew

her father cordially detested, made him suddenly realize that should he force a quarrel here, he would be certainly defeated. After a while, he muttered between his lips:

"Very good!"

Then, as the old affection for the deserted Bob came back, and he imagined the latter wandering houseless and alone through wild, savage places, whilst his cousin, without a particle of feeling or remorse, had transferred her affections to an absolute stranger, a feeling of great compassion for Maxwell came over him, and the tears started into his eyes.

"And so you have thrown Bob Maxwell over," he said at length. "Poor Bob!"

"Well, no," she said, with singular composure. "I should rather say that Mr. Maxwell had made it but too clear that he wished our engagement at an end!"

"That puts a new complexion on affairs," said the Major. "When did Bob break up the matter?"

"There was no formal understanding between us," said Mabel. "But I knew, after that last evening in the Caragh Lake Hotel, that it was his wish that all should be at an end between us."

"But he never said so?" persisted her father.

"No, never, but I had no intention of waiting till I was contemptuously dismissed. And this Quixotic expedition would have brought the matter otherwise to a termination."

"I don't believe one d——d word of it," said the Major, in a sudden fury. "'Tis some d——d lie, invented by this Outram or some such sneaking fellow, to prejudice you against your cousin."

"I take no account, Father," she said, "of your violent language; but it is quite useless to suppose that what every club and mess were talking about a month ago could be altogether a fabrication. You knew that Mr. Maxwell was not dishonourable!"

"Yes; by heaven, I'd swear it," said the old man. "Bob Maxwell was the soul of honour!"

"Then, when he made an engagement, call it rash, Quixotic, mad, you may be sure he'd keep it!"

"Yes, certainly, but then he must have been betrayed into it by taunts of cowardice, or somehow. He was too level-headed a fellow to give up his rooms, his club, and — and — and you, Mab, to start off on a fool's errand. Besides," continued the old man earnestly, as he advanced in the defence of his favourite, "Bob was the last man in Ireland to disgrace himself, his family, and his class, by doing what these scoundrels say he did. A gentleman may lose at cards, or on horses, or get decently drunk on honest port, or run away from a scoundrelly bailiff, and be still a gentleman; but to go down amongst these robbing, murdering ruffians, who'd think no more of shooting him than if he were a dog, if once they discovered he was a gentleman — no, no; Bob Maxwell, take my word for it, has never disgraced himself thus!"

And the Major puffed and puffed, as he struggled to catch his breath after such an outburst of eloquence.

Mabel was silent. The Major took the last paper he had intended as an advertisement, and flung it in the fire. Rollo, his big retriever, who had been sleeping on the rug, roused himself, came over, and placed his great head on the Major's knee.

After a long and awkward interval of silence, Mabel arose and put on her hat and jacket again, preparatory to going out. The old man looked at her pitifully and pleadingly; but she took no notice. At last he said:

"Look here, Mab. Give me one chance to find Bob and make it all right with you. Give me time to put the matter into the hands of a detective; and I'll search Ireland for him, and bring him back to you."

"To *me?* Oh, not to me," said his daughter. "That chapter of life is over forever. If you want Mr. Maxwell back, Father, by all means use every instrument you can towards it. But the matter concerns me no longer. I hardly think I shall meet him again!"

"You are a d——d, ungrateful hussy," said the Major, now furious again. "I shall call in Radford to-morrow; for, by ——! neither you nor that cad shall ever touch a penny that I possess."

"You'll come back to reason, Father," she replied. "And some day you'll be glad to withdraw that word, for you will see its injustice."

"Injustice? No, I can't be mistaken. The fellow that would steal away a girl's affection from her intended husband, and who hadn't the courage to come to me and state his intentions, is a cad, and a contemptible one, if he had the Ribbon of the Garter."

"Well, I presume, as Mr. Outram did not care to hazard your good opinion before, he is not likely to embarrass you with his presence now," said Mabel, going out.

"If he does, I'll give orders to Michael to pitch him into the channel," said the Major. "And now one last word —"

But Mabel had gone out. He heard the hall-door slammed; but was unable to follow.

But next day he did communicate with a certain Dublin detective, and gave instructions, whilst he detailed every particular of Bob's appearance, that he was to be found, cost what it might.

CHAPTER IX

CALLED BACK

When Bob Maxwell emerged from the cabin in the valley the darkness had fallen, and the heavy, drizzling rain preluded a wet night. He had some difficulty in making his way to the main road, for the rough passage seemed to branch out into a hundred by-ways that might have led him hopelessly astray. But at last he knew by the evenness of the surface and the absence of rough boulders that he was once more on the County Road, and he pushed briskly forward towards home. But his heart was heavy; and the weight of an unaccustomed fear pressed down upon his spirits. Once or twice he was about to return, and give back the book. "For what use can it be now," he thought, "when I am leaving this uncanny place forever?" But the trouble of returning along the rock-strewn mountain path, and the aversion he felt towards renewing such an inauspicious acquaintance, determined him otherwise; and he moved down the mountain road, heedless of the fine, thin rain that was now soaking through his garments.

It was late when he lifted the latch and pushed in the half-door in Owen McAuliffe's cottage. The family were seated moodily around the fire. The shadow of a great trial was over them, and kept them sadly silent. As Maxwell entered they looked inquiringly towards him, and

perceiving that it was no stranger they turned their sad faces again to the fire. He went over and sat silent on the settlé. After a while the old man said:

"Come over and set near the fire. Were the heifers all right?"

"They were all right," said Maxwell, coming over and taking a chair. "Two men accosted me as I went up the hill; but I paid them no heed —"

"So we hard! so we hard!" said the old man, waving his pipe. "They're gettin' ready for the mornin'."

"I took them safely up to Ahern's, and left them there," continued Maxwell.

"They kep' you too long up there, and you caught the rain," said Mrs. McAuliffe, feelingly, as she saw the steam rising from Maxwell's clothes under the heat of the fire.

"Yes, we were talking a good deal," said Maxwell; "and I didn't heed the time. I should have come home when my business was done."

"An' I suppose you had no supper now a-yet?" he was asked.

"No, I had some milk —"

"Get the bhoy a cup of tay, Debbie," said the old man, "the kittle is boiling."

Before he had tea, however, Pierry came in; and it needed but a glance to see that Pierry was the worse for drink. He flung his hat defiantly upon the settle, then sat down moodily, his head between his knees.

"Oh, wisha, dheelin,' dheelin'," said the old woman, rocking herself to and fro, "and this night, too, of all the nights in the year."

"Whash matther wi' dis ni'?" said Pierry, raising his flushed face.

But he got no answer, and seemed sunk in stupid unconsciousness. When the tea, however, was placed on the table for Maxwell, Pierry seemed to notice it; and stumbling across the kitchen, he placed himself opposite Maxwell and demanded tea also. They gave it to him, and the strong stimulant seemed to arouse him from his stupid torpor without restoring self-consciousness, for Pierry became facetious. With that maudlin, stupid smile that makes a drunken man so absurd and ridiculous, he looked towards Maxwell with swimming eyes, and shouted, like an officer on parade:

"Shoul' awms!"

Maxwell saw at once the insinuation, but he said nothing. The others were quick enough to observe the same, but they were afraid to provoke the drunken fellow into anger.

"Shoul' awms," I say, shouted Pierry again. "'Shun! 'Tinshun!"

Maxwell, though utterly angry and disgusted, continued the meal in silence.

"Ri' 'bout face! March!" shouted Pierry. And then, as Maxwell took no heed, Pierry gave the final sentence:

"Shells! Black ho', fortni'!"

When, however, after a little while, his heavy senses began to lighten a little, he stooped over and said confidentially to Maxwell:

"You're the bhoy we wor lookin' fer. Mike Ahern's plantation! Prepare to 'ceive cavalry! Thiggun-thu?"

And after sundry winks and nods and gestures, indica-

tive of the use of arms, Pierry sank into unconsciousness again.

They opened the settle bed and tumbled him into it, the old mother moaning!

"Dheelin'! dheelin'! an' of all nights of the year, whin we don't know but we'll be thrun upon the road to-morrow!"

Maxwell had to take the bed in the loft. He climbed the ladder, heavy at heart, and put down the candle in the tin sconce on the chair near the bed, which was placed upon the floor. He had not been up here before; and now, before undressing, he took a survey of the room. Half the floor was occupied with hay and straw, room for which could not be found in the barn. There was no ceiling. The rough-hewn rafters were bare; and between them the thatch would be plainly visible, but that it was festooned with a vast white net of cobwebs, whose orifices here and there told of the size of the spiders who had woven them. In fact it was a great dark city of spiders; and Maxwell shuddered as he thought of the possibility of some of these dropping down on his face in the night. He latched the door, removed the candle from the chair and sat down and began to think. What his thoughts were may be conjectured from the final exclamation:

"My God, what a fool I have been! But only to-night remains! To-morrow —"

The morning broke wet and drizzling; but before Maxwell descended from the loft, he heard angry voices of altercation in the yard. The bailiffs, escorted by a cart-load of police, armed to the teeth, had come and had been baffled. Not a beast was on the premises except the huge

collie who snapped defiance at them. High words were being exchanged when Maxwell appeared. There was a group of young men in the yard who were jeering at the bailiffs and taunting them with their ill success by every manner of word and gesture. The bailiffs, on their part, were doing all in their power to provoke an assault, well knowing that it meant instant arrest and imprisonment. When they saw Maxwell their fury increased, and they pointed him out to the constables.

"There's the fellow who abstracted the cattle last night. Take a note of the fellow, sergeant! Believe me, he has a bad record!"

Dispirited as Maxwell was, he strolled over to the bailiff, his hands stuck deep in his pockets, and with that calm air of independence, so utterly different from the abjection or alternating fury of the peasantry, he said:

"You have been guilty of a double slander, for which I intend, at some future day, to take full and adequate satisfaction. You will please give me your name and address; also the name and address of your employer."

The fellow, taken aback, said something insolent; but Maxwell strode over to the car where the constabulary sat, and addressing the sergeant, said:

"You're here in the name of the law; and it is your business to see that the law is not violated. This fellow, as you have heard, has publicly slandered me. I intend to take proceedings against him. You will please give me his name and your own, for I shall have to call you as a witness."

The sergeant gave both reluctantly. He could not quite reconcile the bearing and accent of Maxwell with

his faded clothes, rough boots, and unkempt appearance.

"Very well," he said. "And now, as you are also charged, you will give me your name and address and occupation."

"Certainly," said Maxwell. "My name is Robert Maxwell; my address is Lisheen, care of Owen McAuliffe, farmer; my occupation is farm labourer. Anything else?"

"N — no," said the sergeant, dubiously; and immediately bailiffs and police left the yard, the derisive and triumphant shouts of the men echoing in their ears.

Instantly Maxwell became their hero. His evasion of the bailiffs or their spies the evening before; his cool, independent manner both to these dread myrmidons of the law, and to the police, marked him off as one of a superior class, and yet left them as puzzled about his character or antecedents as before.

"Begor, he's no desarter," said Pierry, who was also thoroughly ashamed of his drunken bout the evening before, and was anxious to make reparation for his rudeness, "or else he'd never have faced the peelers as he did. He's not in the *Hue and Cry*, that's sartin!"

"I wish we had a few more like him in the counthry," said another admirer. "The peelers and the bailiffs would meet their match. See now, how they shivered before him. Begobs, they'd have clapped the handcuffs on us before we could say 'thrapsticks!'"

"That's thrue for you, begor," said another. "You'd be on the side-car now, an' in Thralee gaol to-night, if you hadn't kep' your distance."

But all these eulogiums were lost on Maxwell. He had made up his mind definitely that this business should end, then and there, for him. And he began to be conscious of a strange chill and alternate flushing, that made him think of the possibility of the recurrence of the rheumatic fever from which he had already suffered twice.

"And imagine," he thought, "to be seized with sickness here! My God! what a frightful prospect. I must quit with this insane idea and with these good people at once."

He lingered, however, until the young men, who had gathered in from the neighbouring farms to help, had dispersed; and it was only after the midday meal that he broke his resolution to the family. They were deeply grieved and genuinely sorry. He had crept into their hearts by his quiet, gentle ways, until they began to regard him as "one of themselves." And now that every kind of trial was accumulating and pressing upon them, they began to feel that this, too, was to be part of their unhappy lot, and, whilst they bent beneath it, they began to feel that it crushed out all hope. One thing, however, they should make clear. He had never, by word or gesture, showed the slightest sign of anger or disrespect toward them; and they felt deeply pained that he should have been insulted in their home and by their own son. True, it was in drink; but that was no excuse, so they felt.

"We're sorry from the bottom of our hearts," said the old man, "to be partin' wid you. We never saw or heard anythin' from you but what was good and gracious. An' shure, we thought you wouldn't mind the words of that foolish bhoy in his dhrink!"

"I assure you," said Maxwell, somewhat moved, "Pierry's words had nothing to do with my resolution. I see I have made a mistake; and I want to rectify it as soon as possible."

Pierry, conscience-stricken, had gone out into the fields. He was determined to meet Maxwell; and to make the apologies in private he could not bring himself to utter in public.

"Ef it was them blagards up at Mike Ahern's," continued the old man, "you shouldn't mind them nayther. Shure, they're ignorant, an' don't mane half what they say."

"Believe you me," said the old woman, who was bitter and angry in her sorrow, "that blagard, Driscoll, will meet his match some day. He's always wantin' to fight with some wan or other."

"No, no; you quite misunderstand me," said Maxwell, who began to fear that evil consequences would arise from his departure, "these little disagreements have had nothing to say to my resolution. I see I made a huge mistake, and I want to correct it as speedily as possible!"

"Well, indeed, it would be more proper to give you your right wages from the beginnin'," said the old man. "It was not right to expect you nor anny man to work for nothin'."

Maxwell saw that it was useless to make further explanations. He took down his old valise that had lain these weeks on the top of the dresser, and began to pack in the few, very few things he possessed.

The old woman went about in sorrowful silence; the old man had sat down on the sugan chair, his head bent

low between his knees. Debbie, as usual, was tidying around the kitchen, silent, too, but her face was white, and her hand trembled.

When Maxwell had finished packing, he came forward to say his farewells.

"I have to go," he said to the old woman, for she alone seemed to listen, "but I assure you I shall never forget the kindness I received in this household. And perhaps some day it may be in my power to repay it."

Then for the first time the old woman saw that he was ill; for his face was a bluish purple and his teeth were chattering.

"For God's sake," she said, "if you don't want to be found dead on the road, shtop your nonsense, and set down."

But he only shook his head, as he touched her rough palm. Owen McAuliffe, without looking up, grasped his hand, and said nothing. Maxwell, with a heavy heart, walked out through the yard. He had passed the rough straw carpeting, and was emerging into the field, where Pierry was awaiting him, when he heard a footstep behind him. Turning around, he saw Debbie.

"I quite forgot," he said, stretching out his hand, "to say good-bye! I was thinking of so many things!"

The girl did not take the proffered hand, and he stared at her in surprise. There was absolutely nothing in her appearance to attract the fancy for a moment. She had only the beauty of perfect health, and the glamour of perfect innocence about her. There were no tears in her eyes, for, alas! with these toilers of the earth, every emotion is frozen at its source; but her lower lip trembled as she said, in a low tone:

"You had no right ever to come here!"

Startled by this sudden challenge, Maxwell did not know what to reply. Did this girl divine his secret through her womanly instincts? Did she suspect some love affair, or disappointment? Or did she know, at least, that he was far removed from the class to which he had stooped in his desire to elevate them? He could not conjecture; but he said candidly:

"You are quite right. I should not have come here. But I hope that at least I have done no harm, except to myself."

She kept her eyes fixed steadily upon his face, as she replied:

"But, having come among us, you have no right now to lave us!"

The words touched him. They appealed to his honour and to his conscience. It was the higher call, which he had been on the point of refusing.

The girl placed her hand on his sleeve, and said:

"Come back!"

And he followed her, like one who had no other will, or option. Pierry's apology remained unspoken.

CHAPTER X

IN THE DEPTHS

It was well for Maxwell himself that he obeyed that call. Somewhat shamefaced, he entered the dark cabin again; and Debbie, with instinctive politeness, anticipated his explanation. She did so with that curious air of assumed anger, which the Irish peasant often uses to cloak affection, or relieve the embarrassment of others.

"Begor, 'twas a quare thing intirely," she said, whilst she busied herself about the kitchen, "to allow that *angashore* of a boy to go on the road, an' it pourin' cats and dogs. 'Tis little ye'd like yerselves to be sint out in that weather."

"Wisha, thin," said the mother, "an' sure 'twasn't we sint him, but he plazed himself. An' sure, I towld him he was lookin' as green as a leek."

"You're right," said Maxwell, "and I was wrong. I'm not fit to travel."

"Thin, in the name o' God, pull over your chair, and set down, and dhry yerself. There, Debbie, can't you get the poor bhoy a dhrink of somethin' hot? Sure, he's shivering like an aspin."

So he was. There was a deadly chill all over him, so that he trembled and shook; and there were alternations of hot flushes, when his skin seemed to fill and burn, as if it would burst. He drank the milk slowly, sipping

it leisurely, and not objecting this time to the "spoonful" of spirits which their charity had mixed with it. The rain came down in a steady, calm, persistent way, for it was now November. The little cabin looked darker than ever from the leaden skies without. The one cheerful, grateful thing was the huge fire made up of peat and wood, which threw volumes of smoke up through the broad chimney, and sent a cheerful glow around the dingy kitchen. The old man, sitting in as close as he could on the stone seat, smoked in silence. Pierry, in silence, and with his hands deep in his pockets, stood at the door, the lintel of which was on a level with his face. The old woman was busy in the bedroom; and Debbie, casting a sharp look from time to time at Maxwell, was, as usual, busying herself around the kitchen.

As the day wore on, Maxwell became worse; until at last, as the shades of night came down, he expressed a wish to go to bed. They became very solicitous.

"Did he ever get sick before?"

"Yes, twice," said Maxwell. "I had two attacks of rheumatic fever; and, to be candid, I'm afraid I'm in for another."

The dread word "fever" appalled them. The terror of the famine times and the dread typhus is in the hearts of the people still. He must have seen it written in their faces; for he instantly added:

"It is not a malignant fever, you know, merely a feverish condition arising from rheumatism and causing a high temperature."

They did not understand him; but their duty was plain. They swiftly decided to give up to him the only bedroom

they had, with its two great beds, until he should recover his health and be himself again. He protested emphatically, made out and argued that it was only a cold, and that it would pass off in a day or two. It was no use. He was ordered to bed; and all that rough but generous hearts could do was done for him

That night, perhaps, witnessed the climax of his sufferings and his despondency. He insisted on their retiring; but he asked that a candle, or paraffin lamp, should be left lighted by his side. He knew there was no sleep for him. The terrible dry heat was stifling him; the well-known agonizing pains were creeping down into the extremities of his hands and feet; his heart was beating wildly; he tossed restlessly from side to side beneath the heavy bedclothes. As the night wore on, he became worse. The burning heat became intolerable. The canopy of wood that hung down low over the bed seemed to be crushing him beneath it. Great shadows flickered on the whitewashed walls, and stretched up towards the naked roof. Drip, drip, came the awful rain outside, as it fell from the rotting thatch into the open channels. Restless, fevered, tormented, somewhat excited by the spirits he had drunk, he began to imagine all kinds of dreadful things — that he had been decoyed thither, betrayed, and left to die in such awful surroundings. He recalled his last illness. It was painful and agonizing enough; but he remembered with a pang all the delicate attention he had received; the comfortable, warm, luxurious bedroom; the dainties on the table near the bedside; the scrupulous attention of the doctor; the cool-handed, dexterous, silent, unobtrusive attendance of the two

skilled nurses. He recalled the days of his convalescence; the numerous visits; the card-plate well filled; the presents of fruit; the sweetness of coming back to life. And then he looked around him. The bleared and smoking lamp could hardly be said to have lighted the dark apartment, but it threw light enough to reveal its misery. The wretched fireplace bricked up and whitewashed, the dark recesses of the open ceiling, the mud floor, rough and uneven and pitted; the tawdry and somewhat hideous engravings on the walls — all made a picture of desolation so terrible that, coupled with his feverish condition, it threw him into a kind of delirium, during which he afterwards suspected he had said many wild, incoherent things. He remembered but one. He had been staring for some time in a kind of blank inquiry at a rough representation of the Virgin and Child that was pinned on the cretonne at the foot of the bed. Somehow, in his great agony and desolation, he found a comfort here. And then, suddenly turning around, he came face to face with the Man of Sorrows, hanging on the gibbet of Calvary, and looking the embodiment of all human suffering, which there had culminated in one concentrated agonizing death. Old words, old thoughts, heard long ago in infancy, came back to him, and the feeble murmur rose to his lips:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

When he woke from a deep sleep, although it was troubled with horrid dreams, he found himself in a perfect bath of perspiration. Sweat was dripping from every pore. His hair was wet, as if sponged; and he knew that the bedclothes were saturated through and through. But he felt quite light and relieved from that dry, burning

heat that had been torturing him; but when he attempted to move hand or foot, a terrible pain racked him, and he dared not turn on his wet couch from the agony in his shoulder. The lamp had flickered out; but in the gray dusk he could discern the form of the old woman moving around the wretched room. He coughed to attract her attention; and she came over.

"How are you, *agragal*," she said, "after the night? Sure, we wor throubled about you. Will you have a dhrop oi tay or milk now; or will you wait for your brekfus'?"

"I'll take it now, if you please," said Maxwell. "I've perspired freely during the night."

"Wisha, thin, sure they say that's the best thing in the wurruld for a could or a faver. Whatever is bad inside comes out in the sweat," said the old woman, consolingly. "Wait, now, and Debbie won't be a minit bilin' the kittle; and we'll get you a good strong cup of tay with some nourishment in it."

Maxwell lay still, comfortable but dreading the slightest movement; and in a few minutes Debbie brought in the tea, which he drank eagerly. No skilled nurses in Dublin or elsewhere could equal the gentle and tender strength with which these poor women raised the pillows beneath the sufferer, when they discovered that the least shock or vibration was painful.

After some time Maxwell ventured to ask:

"Is there a physician — a doctor — near?"

"Begor there is," answered the old woman, "and as clever a man as there is from here to London. They say the head docthors in Dublin are nothin' to him; and he's the deuce an' all at the favers."

"I think it would be well if I could see him," said Maxwell.

"We wor thinkin' of that same oursel's," said the old woman. "Sure he can't do you anny harrum, if he don't do you much good. We'll send Pierry by'm bye for the red ticket: and he'll be here before night."

"The red ticket? What is the red ticket?" said Maxwell.

"The piece of paper the doctor must get before he'll go to poor people," answered his nurse.

"Oh!" said her patient. "And must ye always get that?"

"Oh! faith, no," said the old woman. "We're rich, if ye plase, bekase we have a couple of acres of mountain and bog. He wouldn't come to wan of us undher a pound!"

Another revelation that set Maxwell thinking again.

In the evening the doctor came; and at once pronounced the malady — rheumatic fever. After feeling him all over, and examining his heart carefully, the doctor said:

"You had this before?"

"Yes, twice," said Maxwell.

"You had medical attendance, of course?"

"Yes," said Maxwell, mentioning the name of a leading Dublin physician.

"What?" cried the doctor. "I didn't think he kept up his hospital practice!"

"I wasn't in hospital," said Maxwell. "He attended me at my own residence."

A remark which made the doctor draw back, and stroke his chin thoughtfully, and look dubiously at his patient.

"Is there any heart-lesion as yet?"

"Any what?" said the doctor.

"Any lesion of the heart — any dangerous murmurs?" said Maxwell.

"N — no," said the doctor, completely puzzled. "Look here, young man," he said, after a pause, "you know too much. What the devil do you know about lesions and murmurs?"

"Not much!" said Maxwell, wearily, "but you cannot help hearing of those things from doctors and nurses!"

When he went into the kitchen, Maxwell heard the doctor say aloud:

"Whom have ye got here?"

"Wisha, a poor bhoy, doctor, that came around on thramp here a couple of months ago!"

"What's his name?"

"We never axed him; but we hard him say 'twas Robert Maxwell."

"I see," said the doctor, writing his prescription at the kitchen table, "I see. I'm ordering him into the Workhouse Hospital."

"Thin the faver is ketchin'?" said the old woman.

"'Tis nothin' of the kind," said the doctor. "No more than a cough or a cold. But he can't have proper attendance here."

"Begor, thin," said the old woman, bridling up, "av all we hear is thrue, the divil much of an attindance he'll have there aither."

"That's all nonsense, my good woman," said the doctor. "Old women's talk and gossip. If I were sick myself, I'd go into the hospital."

"Begor, thin, you may," said the old woman. "But onless the poor bhoy likes it himself, he'll stop where he is!"

The doctor did not reply; but went into the room again.

"You know the nature of your malady," he said to Maxwell. "You went through it before. I want to send you into hospital where you'll have proper care and attention. These good people have old-fashioned prejudices against it; and they want to keep you here. As your malady is not contagious, I cannot insist. Please yourself."

"What hospital do you speak of?" said Maxwell, again deeply touched by the affectionate interest of these poor people.

"There's only one — the Workhouse Hospital," replied the doctor. "But it is well managed; and you'll have every care."

"Yes, an' if he die, he'll be lef' die without priesht or minister, and be buried in the ban-field," said the old woman, coming in.

"Here, I wash my hands out of the matter," said the doctor. "Of course, I'll come to see you; but in your case, nursing is everything."

Maxwell remained silent for a long time. Then, suddenly starting up, he said;

"As these good people are kind enough to keep me, I'll remain with them. The matter is in higher hands."

"All right," said the doctor, going out. "Just let me know from time to time how things are going on. You'll get that medicine and liniment and medicated cotton at the dispensary," he said to Pierry. And going out the

door, he turned back suddenly, and said in an undertone:

"He's no poor boy on tramp! Take my word for it!"

And so Robert Maxwell was now, for life or death, in the hands of these unskilled and more or less ignorant peasants. He thoroughly understood his risks; but he was content.

In the afternoon he dropped into a deep slumber, broken by some fitful dreams. When he awoke, the old man this time was his nurse. He noticed some change, he thought, about the bed; and, after a good deal of musing, he discovered that the sacred pictures, which he had watched so keenly the night before, had been removed. He made the remark to the old man.

"Wisha, they thought, I suppose," he replied, "that you mightn't like them. And sure, we wouldn't like to interfere with you at all, at all, in the way of religion."

"Would you mind asking Debbie to put them back?" said Maxwell.

"Begor, no," said the old man. "Sure, 'tis she an' the ould woman will be glad intirely."

And the pictures were put back.

This gave them some encouragement to go further. They had never broached the subject of religion to their guest, through a sense of delicacy and reverence for his own opinion. But now, his life was somewhat in danger; and his "poor sowl" became an object of much interest and solicitude.

"Wisha, now," said Owen McAuliffe, late in the evening, when the bottles had come, and the liniments had been applied and the aching limbs of the patient had been

swathed in cotton, "we do be thinkin' that perhaps, as you had the doctor, you might also want to have some one to say a word or two about your sowl?"

"Is there any minister in the neighbourhood?" asked Maxwell.

"Not nearer than Thralee, I'm afeard," said Owen. "There used to be a church down there where you see the tower, or ould castle; but the place was shut up years ago, and the roof was sowld."

Maxwell remained silent again a long time. At length he asked:

"What kind of gentlemen are your priests?"

"Wisha, thin, I wouldn't have mintioned them, at all, at all, to you, av you hadn't spoken yerself. But we have as nate and dacent priests as are to be found in any parish in Ireland."

"Is any of them old — I mean, advanced in years?"

"There is, begor," said Owen. "But the quare thing intirely is, that the ould man is the cojutor; and the young man is the parish priesht."

"How is that?" asked Maxwell. "I thought it was the other way!"

"And so it ought to be; an' so it ought to be. But quare things happen sometimes."

He did not like to proceed further with his revelations, in presence of a Protestant. But Maxwell persisted.

"Well, thin, to make a long shtory short, it was this way," said Owen. "The ould man, a livin' saint, if there's wan in heaven, was the parish priesht here twenty years ago, an' 'tisn't bekase I say it, there never was a betther, nor a thruer father of his flock than you, me poor

Father Cosgrove. Well, wan day, somethin' turned up between him an' the bishop. What it was, we don't know. Some say one thing, some say another. Any way, the poor priesht was silenced, and was sint away. 'Twas a sad and sore day for the parish. Thin, after a while, he was reshthored; but he had to go as cojutor; an' he wint. But he had an ould hankerin' after the place an' the people; and he axed to be sint back to us as cojutor, where he was formerly parish priesht. To the surprise of every wan, the bishop sint him back; an' here he is, an' the people would kiss the ground undernathe his feet."

"And the parish priest — is he old?"

"Ould? Yerra, no; he's young enough to be Father Michael's grandson!"

"I'll see that man," said Maxwell, after a pause. "Would he come?"

"You may be sure he will," said Owen McAuliffe, in a state of high delight.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE SUMMITS

THE Major sat in his armchair beside his comfortable fire one of those dead, dull, leaden days in November, whilst Maxwell was passing through his critical illness. He had given a gloomy, sad, unwilling consent to his daughter's marriage with Outram. He had under great pressure, and with great mental pain, abandoned his pet project of Mabel's marriage with Maxwell, whom he now gave up as hopelessly lost; and in this, as indeed in most other matters, he found he had to submit to the will of his capricious, but very determined, child. He had received Outram into his house as his accepted son-in-law; but he was an honest old fellow, and found it impossible to pretend to an interest he did not feel, or an affection which he could not simulate. He was tortured by two bitter feelings, which at last neutralized each other — an aversion to Outram, which he found it hard to explain, and honest anger against Maxwell, for having disappointed him so sorely. But, as there was no great principle involved where Outram was concerned, no rupture of class distinction, no violent snapping of old and cherished traditions, he was the more readily brought to telorate him, than to forgive one who had violated all the proprieties, broken caste, and was the possible pioneer in a movement that would revolutionize the country, and

bring disaster and ruin on the dominant, ascendant class. By degrees, he began to regard Maxwell as a traitor to his own; and, being an old military man, to whom treason was the unforgivable sin, he had finally determined to abandon Maxwell, and to allow Mabel's marriage with Outram.

And yet, somehow, he could not quite reconcile himself to Outram, much less make a friend or confidant of him. There was some strong feeling of repulsion which he could not explain; and, being a man of facts, who hated analysis of any kind, he did not trouble himself very much to ascertain where the motive of dislike lay hidden. It was there, and that was enough.

"I don't like the fellow, Mab," he would say, "that's all. He's well-looking, and all that; and, of course, will catch a girl's fancy. But I don't like him, that's all about it."

Mabel quoted his position at the Castle and his C. B. The Major snorted.

"There's many a cad at a Castle ball," he said, "and many a scoundrel a C. B. No, no; I don't mean to say anything against Outram. I know nothing about the fellow, except that he flogged natives in Serampoul; and is always talking about the 'whip and the sop.' I don't like that, even if the Irish are d——d scoundrels and Hottentots."

This November evening the Major was in a particularly gloomy mood. The dull, damp weather had brought on his gout again. Outram was to dine; and he had to dine alone with his betrothed, because the Major was on "slops" and could not get away from his arm-chair. He

was doubly impatient during that long and tedious dinner, as he thought it; and fifty times he asked the footman when it would be over. At last, Outram appeared. He was slightly flushed; but apparently cool and collected as usual, as the Major pushed a decanter of port and a box of cigars before him.

"I don't know if you feel this beastly weather — this muggy, clammy, wet blanket that hangs down over this confounded country these two months. But it drives me to despair, especially as it develops this infernal gout."

And the Major shifted carefully the uneasy foot.

"You should have gone abroad in October," said Outram. "All the civilized portion of these hyperborean regions migrates to India, or at least as far as the Mediterranean until April."

The Major glared at the word "civilized," but said nothing.

"These countries are barely tolerable in summer, that is, if you have got cricket and tennis, and good weather by the sea; but that is always problematical. But in winter, *Ugh!*"

And Outram shivered with disgust.

"You seem to find it tolerable," said the Major, with a slight attempt at sarcasm.

"Yes, just tolerable!" echoed Outram. "You see, between my duties at the Castle, and looking up military matters, which I regret to say are in a hopeless condition, and looking up my estates, which are still more hopeless, I have no time to think of the weather."

"I wish Mabel heard him," thought the Major. "A man may say too little sometimes."

"I don't know," continued Outram, "how your Government could have allowed things to drift into such a rascally mess as you have here in Ireland. Why, there's more respect for law and life in Burmah than here."

"I'm not sure about the law," said the Major. "But as for life, it is not quite so bad as you think. Every Englishman thinks he carries his life in his hands, and is walking among thugs in this country."

"And is not that so?" said Outram. "Would any gentleman walk his estate unescorted in Ireland?"

"I know he wouldn't: and I'm sure he don't," said the Major, who at once placed himself on the defensive. "No Irish landlord ever saw the inside of a tenant's cabin as yet."

"Of course not," said Outram. "I suppose if he did, they'd wash the place with holy water, and throw out the potatoes if his evil shadow rested on them."

"I see, Outram," said the Major, "you've brought home your Indian ideas. As an old Indian myself, I'd advise every returned officer to leave behind him everything but his gold, his liver, and his curry-powder."

"I cannot agree with you, sir," said Outram, who was a little more flushed, "I am convinced that if we governed Ireland as we govern India, you would have a settled country in twelve months."

"You govern India by the *prestige* of British arms," said the Major, whose old military pride was stirred by the allusion. "Clive and Napier, Havelock and Gough are the men that are governing India to-day by the aid of — native jealousies!"

Outram by no means liked this laudation of the past

at the expense of the present. He thought he had done a fair share himself towards the maintenance of British power in the East.

"It is not the ghosts of the past," he said, "but the men of the present that hold the reins of power."

"The reins are dragged too tight sometimes," said the Major. "I saw things in India the recollection of which makes me shudder."

The Major had become meditative.

"Ha! ha!" said Outram, whose brain had become clouded under too deep potations, "an old soldier to fear. What would the Buffs say?"

"It was not the fear of death or danger I alluded to," said the Major, "although that comes down on the nerves of brave men sometimes; but, by Jove, we can't stifle our consciences altogether."

"It was fortunate for us that the founders of our Indian empire had none," said Outram. "Consciences are all right for full-dress church parade on Sunday morning here and in England, when you kneel on soft cu — cushions, and hear the children sing the Anthem and the women look so — so nice and — dainty, with their hats and gloves and pretty — pretty prayer-books. But, by Jove! when you are in the thick of battle, and dealing with rascally natives, conscience is altogether out of place."

"I'm sorry to hear you say so," said the Major, mildly. He was unwilling to provoke a controversy now.

"Look here, Major," said Outram, somewhat thickly. "I'll listen to no d——d nonsense about conjuns. The British army would never have conquered the world if they had conjuns. Eh? 'Tis all d——d nonsense about

humanity and lifting up fallen races. A Paythan is a Paythan, and an Irishman is an Irishman the world over. And 'tis the bizness of an Englishman to — squelch them. It is, by ——!"

The Major was looking at him with some disgust and growing apprehension, when the footman entered and presented a telegram on a salver. It was from a central detective agency in the city, and ran thus:

"Some traces found of missing, and are pushing inquiries rapidly. Hope definite information in a few days."

"Look here, Major," continued Outram, too stupid to notice the look of pleasure on the Major's face, "ther's no use in pretending to be what we aren't. God made men different. The lion is not the skunk; and the tiger is not the cobra. They won't sit down together nowise. What does the lion do when he meets skunk? Squelches him. What does the tiger do when he meets cobra? Squelches him. So, too, a Briton is a Briton; an' a Paythan is a Paythan; and a Paddy is a Paddy. Now, what should the Briton do to the Paythan and the Paddy? Squelch him. Look, now, at that fool, Maxwell! A good fellow, but forgot himself. He forgot he was a gen'leman. Began to read all about a d——d old fool in Russia — Tolstoi; and wanted to become an Irish Tolstoi. Probably by this time he's killed and hidden in a Kerry bog."

"No," said the Major, sententiously, holding up a telegram. "He's alive. I've just heard from him."

"Ah!" said Outram, with a maudlin laugh, "too cute. By Jove! the fellow will come out of it, an' I've lost my ring."

"What ring?" said the Major, with suddenly aroused curiosity.

"Nev' mind! nev' mind, Major!" said Outram. "Bob thinks it a big thing, he! he! — a talisman. Between you and me, 'tis only one of the seal rings every Persian wears. But Maxwell was too cute. The Maxwells always were, don'che know?"

"I never heard," said the Major, across whose mind just now a new thought, or new temptation, had come. For it had suddenly flashed on him that now, when there was a chance of finding Bob, there was also a superb chance of getting rid of this fellow forever. He had only to touch the bell and say: "Tell Miss Willoughby we'll have some tea!" and Outram was dismissed ignominiously and forever; and perhaps Bob, poor Bob, would be reinstated in his daughter's favour. It was a great temptation; and, as the Major from his reclining chair watched the flushed face and the watery eyes, and heard the thick speech of the half-drunken Outram, the thought would obtrude itself:

"Is it not a duty to Mabel to make her see what is before her? Married to this fellow. What will her future be?"

He put his finger on the bell, and for a long time waited and watched. At last he said:

"Shall I ring for tea?"

"No' for me!" said Outram, quickly. "Good old port for me!"

Then, after a stupid pause:

"I shay, Major! Don't be taken in by Bob. The Max'ls were always shly and treasurous. Wai' an' I'll tell a shtory."

He paused again in his stupor.

"Wha's it? A shtory? Oh, yes! There was once a Max'l. No; tha'sh not it. There was once a duel in Scotland. A Gordon was killed; and he fled. 'Twas fair — a fair fight between gen'lemen! No, what'm I sayin'? A Campbell was killed; an' a Gordon fled. 'Twas all over. Gordon — do you un-shtand?"

"I'm following you," said the Major, very angry, holding his finger steadily on the bell.

"Well, Gor'n fled. An' shtayed away for years. At lasht, wha's it? At lasht a Max'le found him, and sez: 'Come back, ole fel', 'tis all over and forgot.' Gor'n believed him and come back. Do you undershtan'?"

The Major nodded, his finger still on the bell. Far away could be heard the tinkle of a piano, very faint and sweet. And now and again the sound of a footfall, quiet and subdued, in the hall.

Outram opened his sleepy eyes and stared stupidly at the Major.

"Wha'm I sayin'? Yesh; old shtory. Gor'n came back. Big meetin' Sawbath on's return. All clansh asshemble. 'Shut doors,' shouted Max'le, 'murderer'sh here!'"

The Major, spite of his disgust and suspense, became interested.

"Well?"

"Well, whash? Look here, Maj', ole fell' — you'se my fazzer-in-law now. Mabel is my wifesh, ishenot? Yesh; well, I was saying whash?"

"You were saying something about Maxwell and a murderer," replied the Major.

"Wash I? Yesh. Well, Gor'n was sheized and hanged, an' Max'le — the coward —"

"Go on!" said the Major.

"No," said Outram, in a sudden paroxysm of anger and pride. "No, I will not go on! Who the devil are you, you ole fool —?"

This time the Major's finger pressed the gong, and a footman appeared.

"Order Mr. Outram's carriage, and at once," he said, with ill-suppressed anger.

"Yes, sir," said the footman.

There was no more conversation. But the tinkle of the piano came from afar off, very sweet, very tender, as it spoke the thoughts that were uppermost in Mabel Willoughby's mind.

PART II

CHAPTER XII

CYNIC AND HUMANIST

About two or three fields back from the sea, which could be seen glimmering from the heights above Lisheen, and situated on a high knoll, was a mansion, whose broad pediment, large high windows, and stately porch were indications of that massive solidity with which country houses were built in Ireland in the latter years of the eighteenth century. A terraced garden lay along the slope fronting the sea; and behind the mansion a wood of hazels, oaks, and beeches formed the base of a conical hill that seemed to be always blue-black, even in the summer suns. This mansion, restored from the general ruin and dilapidation that had fallen on all such relics of ancient wealth and splendour in Ireland, was at this time inhabited by one of those Englishmen who have, of recent years, taken up their residence in remote places in Ireland, where they reign like little kings. What the motives or reasons are that drive so many excellent Englishmen away from their own country, and even from civilization, to take up their abode in such uninviting surroundings as are to be found in the Clare or Kerry mountains, or Connemara bogs, it would be difficult to conjecture did we not know what a vast variety of influences are forever actuating human minds, and driving men into situations that seem to the ordinary mind so very undesirable. Perhaps loss of

station or of wealth; perhaps cupidity and the desire to utilize the hidden wealth which the blind, dreaming Celt passes by unseen and undesired; perhaps the tedium of civilization and the hidden passion in most men to get back to the simplicities of a natural life — are amongst the causes that have brought about this curious exodus, which, strange to say, seems to be unnoticed. But there the strange fact remains that, in many places along the western coast, a solitary Englishman and his family are often the only Protestants in parishes of three or four thousand Irish Catholics; and, for the most part, they are idolized by the people around. Having no landed interest, they are not concerned about dragging out the vitals of the poor, farming population; they often establish valuable industries, inconceivable to the unenterprising Celt; they give liberal English wages; they are benevolent and humane; and they assume a kind of feudal sovereignty, which a people, accustomed to feudal traditions, most readily acknowledge.

Amongst these was Hugh Hamberton, the gentleman who occupied the mansion on the seacoast described above. He had been in Ireland about three years; and had already secured a kind of local kingship in this wild Kerry country. The mansion had been refitted and refurnished with elaborate taste and at great expense; he had a large staff of servants, mostly English; and he had already created, in the cottages and cabins around, a condition of comfort and a sense of independence, which to these poor people, eternally struggling against poverty, seemed too good to be real. "Too good to be true," was one of their melancholy adages; and their new conditions were so happy

that they sometimes rubbed their eyes to see was it all a dream; or mournfully shook their heads, like sad, prophetic Celts as they were, and declared it could not last.

Hugh Hamberton had been a London merchant, and had amassed an immense fortune by speculations and in the shipping trade; and, like so many Londoners, he had varied his business anxieties and ambitions by little excursions into the vast world of literature, which has a curious exoteric attraction for many who cannot be scheduled amongst its high-priests, or even its votaries. He numbered amongst his acquaintances several very distinguished litterateurs; and seemed to take a special delight in having at his dinner-table not the great stars of commerce, nor the leading lights in politics; but the successful, and even, more frequently, the struggling, poet or journalist, who was just embarking on dangerous seas. Rumour had it, that he extended to the struggling brotherhood even more useful assistance than dinners: and even once a grateful poet had the courage, or hardihood, to speak of him as a Mæcenas of literature. Like all other literary patrons, he did venture, once or twice, into the sacred precincts; but those vergers of the temple, the reviewers, asked him politely to retire. But he kept up his interest in the craft to the end.

In religious matters he had no defined beliefs. He professed to live the life of Christ, without any attachment to religious creeds. One of his reasons for seceding from the Anglican Church was that, on a certain Sunday, he heard from the pulpit a certain text from the Gospels; and the preacher, interpreting the text, declared that its application was limited to the Apostles, who had to do

certain things in order to break down, by the sheer audacity of their lives, the vast fabric of Paganism; but that now, when Christianity had conquered the world, it would be absurd to accept such teaching in its literalness. This amiable and accommodating theory was very grateful to the majority of the well-dressed Christians present, who had laid up their treasures in Consols, and not in the phantom Banks of Eternity. But one man arose from his pew, pale with indignation, and walked down the aisle amidst the startled congregation. Next day he called on that preacher, and put the pertinent, or impertinent, question:

"If what you say is true, and these words of Christ do not apply to any age subsequent to the Apostolic, wherein does Christ differ from Aurelius or Epictetus?"

And not receiving a satisfactory reply, he did not darken a church door again; but read the New Testament, and Robertson's (of Brighton) Sermons every Sunday.

It will be seen from this that the man had a terrible taint in his character, the taint of inability to compromise, the sin of too great sincerity. And as it is the oil of compromise that makes the wheels of life revolve with smoothness, it may be supposed that Hugh Hamberton got many a rude shake and stumble, as he plunged along the ruts, or rode over the smooth asphalt of life. It is one of the most shocking things in this sad world to see a generous, large-minded man compelled to become cautious and prudent, and sometimes even hardened and sceptical. That terrible "Timon of Athens," that still more terrible "Lear," show how the bitter truth had sunk into the mind of the greatest interpreter of humanity the world has ever seen. And if Hugh Hamberton did not receive such rude shocks

as these mighty phantoms of Shakespeare's imagination, at least he saw enough of human nature to wish to have as little as possible to say to men during the remainder of his life. His business relations showed him brutally and indecorously all the seamy side of human nature; once he was savagely attacked for an innocent poem that he had foolishly published in a tiny volume, and he was not very long in discovering that the attack was made by a hungry poet, who had partaken largely of his plate and purse. He made no allowance for that exuberant sarcasm which must be interpreted as the "scorn of scorn," of which another poet speaks. Finally, he was dishonoured by a wretched creature, a gentleman of fallen fortunes, whom he had rescued from poverty, and placed in a confidential position. This was the last straw; and Hugh Hamberton determined to fly from civilization, his only companion being the criminal's daughter, who was his godchild, and whom he had adopted as ward and heiress, whilst her father was paying in enforced exile the penalty of his embezzlements.

Why he had selected this remote spot on the Kerry coast can only be conjectured from what afterwards happened. Very probably during some autumn holiday he had skirted this coast in a steamer, or driven along its splendid roads on an outside car. And very probably, whilst his fellow-passengers were listening to the rude jokes or time-worn anecdotes of the driver, he had, with his shrewd English eye, seen in the rude seams where quarrymen had blasted for road metal, or which the mountain torrents had chiselled among the hills, indications of mineral or stone, that might be wrought into

something profitable or useful. For just behind that conical hill was seen, at the period of which we write, a vast quarry torn open with pick and powder; and — most unusual sight in an Irish landscape — huge derricks with great chains swinging in the air to lift from the bowels of the earth the blocks of porphyry and black and green marbles that were to fill yonder luggers, riding in the offing, for exportation to England. Rumour, too, had it that iron ore had been discovered; and there was a secret whisper, that was heard only about the firesides at night, that Hamberton had picked up some heavy stones that glittered in the sunlight, and that he had gone hastily away from home a few days after the discovery. However, here he was, the "masther" of this little colony, stern but kind; exacting a full day's labour for very liberal hire; and leading a lonely, solitary life, unbroken save for the companionship of Claire Moulton, godchild and ward.

She, too, was worshipped; but in another way. She was worshipped for her extraordinary loveliness that made people cast down their eyes when they first beheld her; then worshipped for her bereaved condition, that of orphan, as they believed, an instantaneous passport to the sympathies of an affectionate people; finally, worshipped because she entered every cabin, and spoke "like one of theirsels"; showed the women how to cook and knit; "hushoe'd" the baby and rocked the cradle; and did all manner of kindly offices to the sick. And they worshipped her all the more, because she was English and a Protestant; and because, disdaining the gewgaws of London fashion, she dressed in the plain skirt and

bodice of the natives; and, when she went abroad, never wore but that most becoming of all outdoor dresses, the hooded Irish cloak. True, she yielded to feminine vanity so far that the lining of her hood was daintily quilted in red or blue satin; but that was all. And she wore no head covering but her hair. One companion she had, an old nurse, who acted as duenna, and watched over her with incessant and affectionate attention; and who could never understand how one so delicately reared could fraternize so easily and so warmly with these "dirty Hirish." And the silence of Ireland oppressed her. She yearned for the roar of London, and the soldiers, and the parks.

Withal, Hugh Hamberton was a melancholy man. All men are melancholy who think deeply, or who suffer deeply, especially if they still hold in reverence that abstraction "humanity," whilst they have come to loathe their fellowmen. He cannot be said to have loved anything except his godchild; and this was a pure, ethereal love, where there was not a particle of sense or self; only a perfect, disinterested affection, that sought the happiness and well-being of the beloved, and no more. The sole object that would redeem his life from absolute failure was her happy settlement in life. There was a kind of secondary duty towards these poor serfs that surrounded him. But this was paramount, and then? And then — a certain thought would rise up before him, at first vague and easily put aside; then recurring with irritating persistence, until it became at last an obsession. But he hid it away, away even from himself. He would wait, wait. "Sufficient for the day is its own evil."

He had met the old priest, Father Cosgrove, in one of

the cabins during a hurried visit; saluted him in cold, English fashion, and no more. Then he made a few cautious inquiries of his workmen, afraid to touch too closely on that most delicate topic of religion, with the result that, some weeks later, he asked the priest to his house. Father Cosgrove, in his simple, humble way, trying to be "all things to all men," accepted the invitation. It was winter time, and a huge fire was burning in the splendid library, whose high windows let in a pale sunlight from east and south. It was a large room, and literally crammed with books, exquisitely bound, from the floor to the heavy moulded cornices that ran beneath the ceiling. The fireplace was framed in white marble, richly cut into all kinds of Cupids and Bacchuses and grapes and roses — ancient splendour and modern luxury side by side.

After a few commonplace remarks, Hamberton suddenly stood up, and standing on the hearth rug, his hands behind him, he shot these questions at the priest in a quick, peremptory manner:

"I understand, sir, that you were at one time rector or parish priest here?"

"Yes, yes, at one time, long ago, long ago," said the priest, repeating himself as if it were a matter of very little consequence to any one.

"You were silenced?" said his examiner.

"Well, yes, yes, yes; there was a little misunderstanding, a little misunderstanding" — and he waved his hand in the air, as if to blow it away.

"Then you recommenced life in your old age as curate I understand?"

"I did, I did, I did. No responsibilities, you know; no responsibilities!"

"And after a time you, at your own request, were sent back here as curate, and in a subordinate position, where you had before to suffer disgrace?"

"'Twas my own wish, my own wish," said the old priest, shuffling in his chair. "I wanted to see the old people before they passed away forever; I wanted to see the boys and girls I had married, and to see their little families grown up about them; I wanted to see the little children I baptized, now young men and women; I wanted to see the old mountains and the glens and to run down here sometimes to hear the sea talking. And so the bishop took pity on me, and sent me back without any care or trouble, without any care or trouble." And he waved his hand again in the air.

"That's very good," said Hamberton; "but you have come back in a manner that's humiliating to human nature; and I believe you are on a much lower stipend, and have all the rough work?"

"As to the humiliation," replied the old man, "it is just about what I deserved, neither more nor less. As to the stipend, I have seven pounds a year and what the poor people choose to give me; and I want for nothing — absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing. As to the work, I have a purty boy of a parish priest, who finds every kind of excuse for doing what I should do. This Sunday he wants to see a certain person in the outlying chapel, and he must go; next Sunday he wants to see the schoolmaster, and he must go; next Sunday he hears there's a leak in the roof, and he must go. He's just like the people

in the Gospel, that found an excuse in buying farms, marrying wives, etc.; only that they excused themselves for not going; and he invents excuses for going, and sparing me the trouble."

Hamberton looked at the old man long and earnestly. There was nothing very attractive in his appearance. He was about the same age as Hamberton himself, grizzled too in his hair, and wrinkled in his cheeks; but there was a strange, quiet, serene look on his pale face and in his fearless eyes that Hamberton never saw before.

"But," said Hamberton at length, "I understand you have to get up at night and go long distances in snow and storm, and face all weathers, and every kind of disease —"

"There you are again!" said Father Cosgrove; "not a bit of it! My parish priest has left strict orders to his housekeeper, on pain of dismissal, to send every night call to his room. He says he can't sleep; and he'd rather be out in the fine fresh air at night. Once or twice I thought to beat him, but he was out the front door before I was on the stairs. I sometimes tell him he'll be damned for telling lies!"

"He won't!" said Hamberton, emphatically. "Would to God, if there be a God, that all men were such liars as he!"

He had become suddenly excited, and had lost, in an instant, and to the old priest's consternation, the equanimity he had up to this manifested. He turned almost fiercely on the old man, as he asked:

"Tell me, are there many more men like that in this country?"

"Oh, yes, oh yes; lots, lots!" said the priest, "every-

where; everywhere!" And he made circles in the air with his hands.

"I haven't seen them," said Hamberton. "Up to this moment I believed that horses and dogs were the nobility of creation."

"Well, horses and dogs are good, too," said this modern St. Francis. "Everything is good that the good God has made —"

"Except men!" said Hamberton, bitterly.

The priest was silent. He had never heard these opinions before.

"Look here, sir," said Hamberton, pointing his finger at the priest, "what you say may be true. I'm not in a position to deny it. But I have walked through life, as through a forest, where I had to pick my every step for snares and pitfalls; and where every moment I might expect to hear the snarl, or feel the bite, of a wild beast. In the beginning I opened my heart to men; but I had to shut it with a snap. I wanted to be generous, to give freely and royally; I found I was despised as a fool. Men took my gifts and laughed at the donor. I brought a wretched, scraggy, half-starved tatter-de-malion — but a genius — into my house, clothed his nakedness, fed his hunger, and opened to him my purse. The frozen wretch, when he had thawed, bit me. But — let me not do a class an injustice. It was only amongst the lower classes, as they are called, that I received gratitude; and hence I hold that it is civilization that makes men selfish and brutal. There is honour among thieves; there is love and kindness among street-walkers. Did you ever read De Quincey?"

"No," said the old priest. "I haven't read much at all, at all!"

"Well, you will read in his *Confessions* one of the most wonderful examples of fidelity and truthfulness ever recorded, which shows that the higher you advance in civilization, the more hardened and brutal men become; till deception and lying are the recognized virtues of good society; and the lower you go, the more Godlike men become, until, as I say, the horse and the dog are the nobility of creation."

The old man was silent. These were strange and ominous sayings. Hamberton was watching him closely out of half-shut, angry eyes.

"I think," said the priest at last — "No," he said at once, as if checking himself on the verge of an admission or an avowal, "I shouldn't think at all on these matters. They are beyond me!"

"But they are your experience, too?" queried Hamberton.

"Oh, not at all; not at all!" said the priest. "I find everybody good and kind and generous. Look at yourself, now! You never saw me before. Yet you introduce me into this magnificent house, and speak to me as an equal."

Hamberton would have smiled at this naïveté. He had never met anything like it before. But he was too much in earnest; and too puzzled about this phenomenon.

There was an awkward silence. Then the priest, as if a sudden idea had dawned on him, said with an air of triumph:

"I have it. It is because you were great and wealthy

and gifted that men envied you and coveted what you have. If you had nothing, men would love you. Look at me! I have no brains; no position; no talents. I am down below most poeple. And they look down on me and love me. I have no money, no lands — only a few books and these old clothes; and, therefore, they have nothing to covet. If you have all that the human heart can desire, you must not complain because men would like to have a little share."

"But my horse and my dog don't want a share," replied Hamberton. "They are content to toil for me, to defend me, to love me for myself — for what I am, not for what I have."

"True, true," said the old priest. "Everything is good; everything is good that the good God has made!"

"Except men!" repeated Hamberton.

The old man shook his head, and rose up to depart.

"You will come again?" said Hamberton.

The priest was silent. He did not know what to make of this strange man.

"You'll find me, perhaps, somewhat different from what you expect," said Hamberton. "Come for your people's sake!"

"I will come," said the priest, about to leave.

"One moment," said Hamberton, his hand on the bell-rope. "You must see my ward."

"Tell Miss Claire to step here for a moment," he said, when the footman appeared.

Claire Moulton was then hardly more than a child. She was a little more than fifteen years old; but, being of a dark complexion in hair and eyes, she looked somewhat

older. And she had acquired all the manners of a young mistress of the household — quiet, self-possessed, and sometimes imperious. Her great beauty was set off, or, as some thought, lessened, by a quick gleam in her great brown eyes, that might be pride, or temper, or genius. With this sudden gleam her great eyes shone when she appeared to answer her guardian's summons. She had never spoken to a priest before, and had been trained by her English nurse to all manner of ugly preconceptions and prejudices against everything Catholic. Nevertheless, when she approached the old man, she glanced quickly at him; and when her guardian said:

"I want to introduce you, Claire, to Mr. Cosgrove!" she bowed. The old priest, in his simple, kindly way, stretched out his hand. She seemed for a moment surprised; but instantly, and with great gravity, she raised the priest's hand to her lips. Hamberton could hardly speak with astonishment.

That evening, before dinner, as the two stood by the fire in the drawing-room, he suddenly asked her:

"Why did you kiss the old priest's hand to-day, Claire?"

"Because he is a good man, and he does not know it," she said, looking him full in the face.

"You never kissed me?" he said reproachfully.

She put her arm around his neck, and drew down his face to hers.

"You are a good man, too," she said, "and you don't know it."

The strong man, his heart hardened and annealed from the hard blows of the world, burst into silent weeping; but that was the happiest dinner he had had for many a long day.

CHAPTER XIII

A NEW SAINT

THE acquaintance, thus auspiciously commenced, ripened into something like intimacy. There was hardly a day that called the old priest away from his presbytery which did not see him installed by that fireside, or wandering for a leisured hour or more about the grounds, which Hamberton had now laid out with great taste and at no little expense. And different as these two men were in temperament and education, they seemed to have some affinity with each other. Perhaps each supplied the other's defects. Perhaps Hamberton saw in this guileless man the simple, unsophisticated, disinterested character he had so long sought for in vain in the world of London. And to the priest there was quite a novel attraction in this strange being, who seemed to his simple mind to have been dropped from another planet, so different were his habits, thoughts, principles from everything to which the priest had been heretofore accustomed. And although sometimes the latter shrank from expressions that seemed to him irreligious and even blasphemous, he imputed the evil to ignorance or inexperience; and here under his eyes were ample compensations for the crudities and irregularities that seemed part of Hamberton's education. For now "the desert had blossomed like a rose." Where a few years ago was a barren and blighted landscape,

wintry looking even in summer, and fronting a cold and barren sea, was now a smiling upland, gay with the colours of many flowers, and feathered with the plumes of handsome trees. And where there had been but wretched hovels, mud-walled and thatched with rotten straw, and surrounded with putrid pools of green, fetid water, were now neat cottages, stone-built, red-tiled, each bright in front with carpets of flowers, and glowing in the rear with all kinds of fruit and vegetables. And all day long to the sound of the sea rang the clink of steel upon marble; and the hiss of the steam which swung the huge derricks around rose like the fall of the surf on the shingle and sand beneath. Tourists, rushing by to Glenbigh or Waterville, stopped their cars, and rubbed their eyes, and asked incredulously: "Is this Ireland?" And many a pale-faced and withered and shrunken American girl, home for the holidays, bade farewell with tears in her eyes to this little paradise; and looked across the darkening ocean with dread forebodings in her heart of the life that was before her in the gehennas of Pittsburg or Chicago.

Claire Moulton, too, was a bright and peculiar feature in this picture. Scarcely emerged from childhood, she retained a certain wilfulness of character, a kind of girlish despotism, which gave her unquestioned power over these primitive people, who feared her for her imperiousness, loved her for her goodness, smiled at her impetuosity, so very like their own impulsive and emotional ways. She endeared herself to them more particularly, because she never stood aloof from them, but walked into their cottages with the familiarity of an equal; gave her little

impetuous orders, which she helped to carry out; scolded the women for untidiness or indolence; and challenged the men if ever they were remiss in their duties. Once, when a rude workman uttered a profane word in her presence, she slapped him across the face; and every one said she was right. The poor fellow came shamefaced to the hall door in the evening, and made a most abject apology.

It was this vein of impetuosity in her character that made Hamberton somewhat anxious about her. A firm believer in the inviolable laws of heredity, he knew there was an oblique line somewhere in this very beautiful and perfect picture; and sometimes he caught himself watching her as she read or worked by the fireside at night, or stooped over her manuscripts, copying or inditing strange, wild verses, that to him seemed incantations.

She was often, too, the subject of much intimate conversation between Hamberton and his new friend. For, although the latter was absolutely guileless and ignorant of the world and its ways, there was a shrewd power of discernment in his character — that kind of intuition which makes children know instinctively who are enemies and who might be friends. Hence, Hamberton spoke often to the priest about the girl; and as she grew into womanhood, and all the strong features of her character became more pronounced and developed, his anxiety increased, and she became a more frequent subject of conversation.

The Sunday evening on which Bob Maxwell had driven up the cattle to the glen in the hills, the three, Father Cosgrove, Hugh Hamberton, and Claire, were

seated around the fire in the library. The weather was cold and drizzling without, and although there was no cold within doors, the sight of the fire in the dark evenings was cheerful. They had been talking of many things; and just then the name of General Gordon turned up, as having come in some more prominent way than usual before the British public.

"*Voilà un homme!*" said Hamberton, enthusiastically. "Yes, Mr. Cosgrove, Gordon does not bring me around to your optimism, but the existence of one such man redeems the race. Look now, if Gordon were in your Church, you'd have the whole tribe of pious Catholics running after him; and you would canonize him, and call him St. Gordonius, and put him into stained-glass windows, and turn him into marble statues, with a helmet and sword and breastplate, with Satan wriggling beneath his feet, and representing all the d——d money-grubbers through the world. Yes; your Church is a wise Church. She knows her best men; and honours them. Macaulay was generally silly; but he was right there!"

"I don't know," said Father Cosgrove, meekly. "Some of our saints were never discovered until years after their death. And some got pretty rough handling during their lives. But that is only as it ought to be!"

"How is that? I don't understand," said Hamberton.

"Neither do I," said the priest, who was always most unwilling to enter into religious matters with a man whose training had not fitted him to understand them. "What does Miss Moulton think?"

"I have but one hero and one heroine," said Claire. "And they bear out your contention, Father. General

Gordon and Joan of Arc. We English burned the latter. She was troublesome and they turned her into bone-ashes. As to Gordon, we shall probably erect a statue to him, if we can find a niche somewhere between tallow-chandlers and soap-manufacturers."

"There, there," said Hamberton. "Claire must say something spicy. By the way, you never met Gordon?" said Hamberton to the priest.

"Oh, never, never," said Father Cosgrove. "I was never out of Ireland."

"No, but Gordon was here," said Hamberton. "He was around here touring I suppose; but he kept his eyes open, and he saw many more things than fifty purblind English statesman would perceive in twenty years. Where have you put that letter, Claire?"

Claire Moulton went over to a table, and picked up a scrap-book, in which she had pasted every little picture or poem or extract she deemed interesting.

"Read it for us, Claire," said her guardian.

And Claire read slowly and with emphasis that famous letter of General Gordon's, containing his bitter comments on the agrarian system in Ireland; and suggesting remedies which only now, and slowly and with reluctance, are being adopted. She read over twice, as if to imprint the words on the memory of her hearers, the lines:

"'In conclusion, I must say, from all accounts and from my own observation, that the state of our fellow-countrymen in the parts I have named is worse than that of any people in the world, let alone Europe. I believe that these people are made as we are; that they are patient beyond belief; but, at the same time, broken-spirited and desperate, living on the verge of starva-

tion in places in which we would not keep our cattle. The Bulgarian, Anatolian, Chinese, and Indians are better off than many of them are. The priests alone have any sympathy with their sufferings; and naturally alone have a hold over them.'"

When she finished, Hamberton was looking steadily into the fire, a deep frown on his handsome features. Father Cosgrove was softly crying. She took the scrapbook over and laid it aside on the table.

"There, mark you," said Hamberton, as if he were arguing against an adversary, "that's no partisan, no politician. But we have seen the thing with our own eyes — 'man's inhumanity to man' — injustice and cruelty legalized."

"Well, no matter, no matter," said the priest. "'Blessed are they that suffer persecution' — there, I forget the rest!"

"I have no patience with that kind of thing, Mr. Cosgrove," said the Englishman, angrily. "That kind of religion doesn't appeal to me. No man is bound to lie down and get himself kicked, when he can stand up and punish his aggressor. It seems to me that your religion has emasculated this people, and turned them from a nation of fighters into a race of whimpering slaves."

"That's what old Ossian said to St. Patrick," said the priest. "The old pagan couldn't understand why he shouldn't smash his enemies in this world and send them to hell hereafter. But you know —"

"I know that I agree with that old pagan gentleman thoroughly," said Hamberton. "In public or in private, in races and in individuals, the law of self-preservation

holds; and that cannot be if a man is not at liberty to defend himself and punish his aggressor. But, Claire, you forgot something. Gordon ended that letter with a comical proposal. Just get that letter again, and read it."

Again Claire Moulton took up her scrap-book, and read:

"'I am not well off; but I would offer —— or his agent £1,000, if either of them would live one week in one of these poor devils' places, and feed as these people do.'"

"A safe offer," said the priest. "That is an impossible condition, an impossible condition," and he waived it away.

"I think I would marry that man," said Claire, laughing. "That is, if the fellow came out of the ordeal alive."

"Who is he, by the way?" asked Hamberton.

"The landlord of a large district many miles from here," said the priest. "He has a bad name; but we don't know; we don't know; we don't know!"

And the old priest dropped into silence, as Claire Moulton left the room.

Hamberton had noticed that he had shivered when Claire uttered the word "marry," and had looked towards the girl, as if beseechingly. He understood well the emotion and the look; and he closed the door carefully, and came over, and laid his hand on the old priest's arm.

"Fear not!" he said. "All will come right. Claire will never marry, and I —"

"How do you know? How can you know?" said the old priest, passionately.

"There, now, don't be disturbed," said Hamberton, soothingly. "You'll find all will be right in the end."

"It cannot be right. It must be wrong, all wrong," said the priest, still in the passionate tone that contrasted so painfully with his usual meekness. "Oh, how can you think of it — you who are so good, so good — whose life is so perfect before God?"

"There is no God!" said Hamberton, solemnly. "And I am not good."

"But you are, you are," reiterated the priest. "You cannot deceive me. Cannot we see your goodness around us everywhere?"

"What you, my dear friend," said Hamberton, "in your simplicity and guilelessness, call goodness, is only selfishness in another form."

"No, no, no," said the priest. "I cannot, I will not, believe it. Look at all these poor people whom you have made happy. Look at their cottages, their gardens, their flowers, their steady weekly wages, where there was but poverty and dirt and ignorance. And all this the work of your hands. And you, *you*," he cried emphatically, "to even think of such a thing."

"Listen!" said Hamberton, sitting down and speaking slowly. "I appreciate your kindness and your good opinion; but you do me wrong. You impute to me virtues which I do not possess, which I never possessed. I have money, more than I know what to do with. I could have gratified myself one way by purchasing a yacht and fooling around the world; but I had no taste for seasickness and tarred ropes and danger. I could have travelled; but I had no fancy for being packed into the narrow compartments of Continental trains, squeezed between sweating women, who would not allow the eighth of an inch of a

window to be raised in the dog days. I could have spent my money on rioting and dissipation; but I had no fancy to be racked by the gout; and, thanks to my dead mother, I abominate uncleanness, physical or moral, in every form. What then? I come here. I create a certain beauty out of a certain ugliness. It pleases my taste, which is fastidious, I admit, by placing certain pretty pictures before my eyes, where there were but certain deformities. I enjoy all the pleasures of a poet — a maker of things. I can now look from my window, and enjoy the beauty of that harbour and those sands and cliffs, and that sea, without having the prospect marred by rotting roofs, and gaping mud-walls, and ragged babies. I have made these men decent workers out of drunken loafers. I like to hear the click of the chisel, and the hiss of steam, and the creaking of the derrick. But I am not such a fool as to call all this virtue. I know it is nothing but the selfishness of the ordinary parasites of society under another form. All this altruism is but *self* disguised; and sometimes, I think, *self* disguised in an ignoble form."

He stopped, and remained for some time buried in deep thought. Father Cosgrove was silent. These were psychological positions never before presented to his mind. Hamberton continued:

"Believe me, my dear friend, self is the only God — egoism the only religion. All the great deeds of the world, that sound heroic, are done simply through selfish impulses. Scævola putting his arm into the flames — what was this but pride, or vanity — the desire of that most contemptible thing called fame? Sidney giving the

drink of water to the dying soldier — what was this? The same impulse of 'self' that made me build yonder cottages. And all your patriots, statesmen, churchmen, masquerading in their rags and tinsel before the world — each rogue or fool, admitting to his valet or his looking-glass that he is but an actor — why, he is not even that. He is but a poor puppet in the hands of that mysterious thing, called Nature, which keeps up its little show, lighted by its little lantern, through the selfish impulses of these marionettes."

"I cannot follow you, I cannot follow you," said the priest. "These things are beyond my comprehension. But it seems to me you wrong yourself. You are not the man you have painted. I saw you the other day take up in your arms and kiss the child of that unhappy woman — Nellie Gillespie. A bad man wouldn't do that!"

"I didn't say I was bad," replied Hamberton. "In fact, there is no good or bad —"

"And you must admit your affection for Miss Moulton. At least, there is no self there."

"Right. None, absolutely none. And hence, when I see Claire happy beyond question, I shall obliterate self and blot it out forever!"

"Then," said Father Cosgrove, rising, "I shall do all in my power to thwart every attempt at having Miss Claire settled. The cost would be too great, the cost would be too great."

"You cannot," said Hamberton. "This is beyond your power or mine. Behind blind Nature is the blinder force called Fate. If it is Claire's destiny to marry, the mighty wheel of Fate will turn round slowly and blindly,

and place at her feet the man she is to wed. She cannot escape him, nor can he escape her. And it isn't you, my dear friend, that can grasp the spokes of that wheel and stop it, or turn it back."

"But if I tell Claire — Miss Moulton — what will happen after her marriage, she never will, she never can, marry," said the priest.

"But you won't, you cannot, tell Claire anything that I have told you. You know," he continued, laughing, "that we are taught to believe that all priests are casuists, and can find an excellent reason for every violation of pledge or honour, or every contravention of truth. But I know you — know you well. I won't say but that you are at liberty to thwart Claire's marriage, although you have perceived, I think, that hers is not a character to be thwarted without peril. But you know that you are not at liberty to thwart *me* by any unseasonable revelation of my principles or purposes."

"Then, may God help me!" said the old priest, rising up. "I am going to say a dreadful thing — I'm sorry I ever knew you or Miss Moulton. My parish priest, who is only half my age, often told me to beware of intermeddling in other people's affairs. He meant, of course, that I am an old fool. And so I am; and so I am!"

"Well, we mustn't be premature," said Hamberton, smiling. "Let us await the development of things. And I shall be more complimentary than you, and say that it has been a pleasure and a profit for me to have known you."

"Ah, you're too good, too good," said the priest, shaking his hand in farewell. "God will save you both! God will save you both!"

CHAPTER XIV

NOT FORGOTTEN

LIKE so many others in the hour of their dereliction, Bob Maxwell did not think that he was still an object of interest — of hope, or commiseration, or contempt — to many. We are prone to think, in the hour of agony, that we stand solitary in our trial. It is not so. Even as a matter of self-interest, we centre the thoughts of many, whose images may have faded from our own minds.

There were two places, at least, where Maxwell was not only not forgotten, but where his memory was kept in frequent and fragrant remembrance. The one was the cabin of the Widow Leary, up amongst the bracken, where the burn sparkled across the road, and the birds never ceased from singing even in the winter time. The other was the couch of almost perpetual agony, on which Major Willoughby lay.

In the little homely conferences, about "ways and means," between Darby Leary and his mother, the "masther" was often mentioned. For Darby had very pleasant recollections of that little camp down there in the glen; and before the bright, fragrant fire of pine logs and turf during that winter, whilst the wind soughed dismally outside, and whilst his bare legs were almost scorched and blistered with the heat, his fancy summoned up the long, sweet, summer days in the glen, when he lay flat

in the sun, on a bed of fern, or leaned up against a sunny ditch, and ate, with a relish unknown to the most fastidious épicure, the mashed potatoes and the rich creamy fat, that his master had to cut away carefully, by doctor's orders, from the sirloin or the steak.

It almost made Darby cry, there in his cabin and condemned to potatoes and milk, to think of that beef-fat — to think of his esctasy when he held it in his fingers, and watched its creamy transparency; to think of the bite of the hot potato, which was dry in his mouth, until, oh, ye heavens! he liquified it with that delectable jelly, and rolled the morsel in his mouth, whilst the crisp skin crackled under his teeth. No coloured son of Africa with his juicy watermelon, no Esquimo with his whale-blubber, ever enjoyed such ecstasies as Darby; and when he had wiped his fingers on his corduroy breeches, he wondered as only a pleasant digestion can make one wonder, what strange folks these rich people must be, to reject the most glorious delicacies of life, and limit themselves to lean beef and soda-water.

His mother had her own interpretation of these anomalies.

"It keeps them from gettin' shtout an' fat," she said, "in ordher to plaze the ladies."

And Darby said: "Begor, mudder, you're right. That's it!"

He told his mother, too, that the "masther" wanted him to drink ink from a black bottle; but that he only tasted it, and spat it out. But he said nothing, wise fool that he was, about the "wee drap" of spirits which sometimes, but not often, Aleck had given him on the sly, and which

gripped his throat and made him cough, and then say ecstatically: "Ah!" as he rolled his eyes towards heaven.

Very minute and graphic, too, were the stories Darby told his mother of the "doin's" and "carryin's-on" of the great people; and very great was her wonder when she heard what a complicated thing civilization was. How people could eat eight or ten courses of soups, fish, entrées, joints, fruits, sweets, cheese, etc., etc., without becoming what she called "porpushes," surpassed her understanding.

"Where the dickens do they shtow it all away?" she often asked. "And why are they so shlim and yallow, when they have the besht of 'atin' and drinkin' every day?"

When Darby told her that the "masther" had two kinds of "mate" for his dinner, it produced great surprise in the old woman's mind, who never saw meat but at Christmas and Easter. But when she heard of the *à la Russe* dinner, she decided the world had gone mad.

Then, one day, in a moment of inadvertence and communicativeness, Darby, with a blush mantling his already red neck and face, told his mother how fine ladies dressed for dinner, and described their toilettes rather minutely as he had seen them, after much hesitation and many scruples, one summer night. The poor old woman, who, in Oriental fashion, wore several coverings across her breast, and several wrappings around her head, was slow to grasp his meaning. When she did, she gave way to a regular paroxysm of passion.

"Be off, you blagard you," she cried, snatching up the bellows, and smiting this unfortunate reporter across the

back. "What do you mane by bringin' sich things into a dacent house? What the divil timpted you to invint such shtories? I suppose thim grooms and gamekeepers. Go out and wash your dirty mouth in the river; or, be this and be that, you'll niver set down to a male in this house agin."

"Shure, I didn't mane no harrum, mudder," said the poor fellow, whimpering. "Shure, I only tould you what I saw with me own two eyes —"

"You niver saw nothin' of the kind, you ruffian," said his mother. "Don't be tellin' me sich shtories as that. you were listenin' to them blagards at the hotel talkin' of things that no dacent Christian ud mintion; and you want to pershuade yer ould mother you saw thim yourself."

"Pon me sowkins, I saw thim," said Darby. "And, more'n that, I saw the gould bracelets on their bare arrums —"

"That'll do now! That'll do now! I want no more of yere blagardin'. Take that where 'tis welcome. Be the way, whin were you at yere juty?"

"The fust of de mont," said Darby. "I never missed it yet."

"Did ye do your pinnance?" asked his mother.

"I did, begor, twice over, for fear I'd make a mistake," said Darby, confidently.

"Thin, you'll go to the priesht agin next Saturday, and tell him of your bad talk; an' av I don't see you at the althar Sunday morning, cut the head aff av me if you inter this cabin agin!"

It will be seen from this that Mrs. Leary's temper was variable; and really Darby, after all his experience, didn't

know, as he said, "Whin he had her." Sometimes when Darby was facetious, and put on the airs of a fine gentleman, Mrs. Leary was amused, and even proud of her poor boy. When, for example, Darby rushed in with a ploughman's appetite and in glorious spirits, and demanded, in an affected accent:

"What for dinner to-dee, mudder?" the old woman would answer good-humouredly:

"Oh! everything, everything, yer 'anner; and plinty of it!"

"Shawl we have roshe-beef to-dee, mudder?"

"To be sure, to be sure; an' lashin's and lavin's of it, yer 'anner!"

"An' plum-puddin', av coorse?"

"Oh, yeh; av course, yer 'anner. Is there annythin' else yer 'anner 'ud like?"

"Lemme see! No; I think that'll do!" And Darby would sit down with a relish to the potatoes and salt, sometimes improved with a little dip; and the old mother would think:

"Wisha, who knows? Quarer things happen. Look at Mrs. Mulcahy's boy, that I knew a bare-legged gossoon, like Darby, a few years ago; and look at him now home from America. Why the masther is not aiqual to him. And perhaps, who knows, wan of thim foine ladies may take a fancy to me poor bhoy — sure, he's straight as a pike-staff, and as light on his feet as a bird. And, shure, didn't ould Captain Curtis' daughter elope wid the coachman? Not that I'd be wishin' that, God forbid! Shure, his soul is fust and foremost! But, if it was right, an' they had the priesht's blessin' —"

So the maternal fancy wandered, throwing up its little castles here and there, whilst Darby, with much emphasis, gobbled up the floury potatoes and swilled the skim-milk from his wooden porringer.

But, once or twice, Mrs. Leary caught Darby suddenly "doin' the gran' gintleman," and she resented it. For when she caught Darby in the kitchen, the sugan chair tilted back, till it nearly upset the centre of gravity, whilst Darby with crossed legs, and an attitude of ease and voluptuousness, smoked a cigarette of brown paper or straw, she gave him the bellows across his back, and sent him howling into the haggard.

But, whilst thus maintaining proper discipline in her household, and keeping Darby within proper bounds, she never tired of hearing him talk of the "masther." What the "masther" did; what the "masther" said; how the "masther" dressed; what the "masther" ate, the "masther's" fine round curses, when he was in a passion; the "masther's" acts of generosity, when he was in a better mood; these were endless topics around that humble fireside there amongst the Kerry hills. And these gloomy December days, when the leaden skies stooped down and wrapped mother earth in their heavy folds, and while Maxwell lay, in agony and desolation of spirit, there in Owen McAuliffe's cabin, many were the conjectures made by the widow and son about his surroundings and occupation, and many were the hopes and wishes that the winter would swiftly pass, and the little bell-tent shine out once more down there amongst the furze and bracken in the glen.

"'Twon't be long comin' now, agra," the widow would

say. "Sure the days will be lingthenin' soon; and thin we'll be into Aisther; and, sure, 'tis only a lep from that to summer. We won't know where we are, whin the Scotchman will be up here lookin' fer you agin."

"That's thrue fer you, mudder," Darby would reply. "An' shure if the 'masther' doesn't come this time, there'll be always gintlemen at the Hotel. I hope that foxy scoundrel won't come, though; or I'll give him a worse duckin' thin he giv me, bad luck to him!"

"Sh! Shtop that cursin', Darby. 'Tis no good here nor there. An' shure, 'tis always betther say the good thing. An' the walls have ears."

"The masther wouldn't do it," Darby would reply. "He was a rale gintleman. No wan knows where the foxy fellow kem from. An', shure, I hard the byes saying that he tuk the masther's young lady away from him."

"Begor, thin, she must have the quare taste intirely to turn her back on the masther an' go after an *object* like him. But I wondher what's the masther doin' now?"

"Oh, sphortin' an' injyin' himself, I suppose," conjectured Darby. "Yerra, what else has they to do but divartin' themselves? They gets up whin we're goin' to bed; and goes to bed whin we are gettin' up. They does everythin' by contrayries. Begor, I wouldn't be shurprised now if the masther was away in the West Injies, or some out-of-the-way place injyin' himself; or, maybe, hé's rowlin' about Dublin in his carriage with the Lord Lieutenant himself."

"You wouldn't be afther sayin' that?" said the mother. "He must be a gintleman out an' out to do that. But, shure, wherever he is, may God save him. Only for him,

we wouldn't have the thatch above us to-day. I wondher will he keep it out of yer wages, Darby?"

"The masther? Not him. He thinks no more of that five pounds than you would about a thraneen of male."

"'Tis a fine thing to be rich and happy and contínted," the mother would reply. "I suppose we'll have somethin' ourselves in the nixt wurruld, as we haven't much in this!"

In quite a different manner, and not with less sympathy, did the Major brood over Bob Maxwell these dark December days. His thoughts wandered after the young man, although he had cursed and blowed his folly a hundred times, and had mentally excommunicated him for his Quixotic ideas and his treacherous abandonment of his own class, and the great central dogma of ascendancy.

"'Tis all d——d rot," he would often say to himself, "this talk about justice and equality — all d——d Socialism. The next thing will be the barricades and the guillotine, with all the insufferable poltroonery of this Government. But this comes from ourselves — ourselves! Good God! to think I should live to see a gentleman so forget himself! I hope the fellow, if ever he comes back alive from the hands of these moonlighters, will be ostracized, expelled, and blackballed in every club in Dublin. What will these ruffians think, by that we're afraid? And then — 'tis all up. By heavens! They'd think nothing of lighting the Smithfield fires again and roasting every man of us."

But the Major had gentler moods. Thoughts of Bob — Bob, the son of his old friend; Bob, the splendid sportsman; Bob, the soul of honour, who would no more touch another man's money than he'd take his life; Bob, who

challenged that coward, Ellis, and wanted to bring back that gentlemanly amusement of duelling amongst a retrograde and cowardly generation; and Bob, who he thought would take Mabel to the altar, and be to himself a son and a support in these sad days that were stretching down the declivities of life — would come back; and sometimes Freeman, his valet, would detect him talking sadly to himself; or, be not incredulous, O reader! for human nature is always and everywhere the same, wiping his eyes secretly behind the friendly shelter of the *Times*. And the Major, too, had misgivings about Mabel's future — misgivings which made more poignant his anger and sorrow for Bob Maxwell. It was not only the little episode we have mentioned in a former chapter, but sundry other little things — little revelations of character in a look, in a word, in a gesture — that made the Major uneasy. Above all, there was that secret repulsion, that original, intuitive dislike for Outram, which he could not explain, which he strove to conquer, which remained in spite of every effort to dislodge it. And sometimes, although he hated and despised himself for doing so, he would speak on the subject to Freeman.

"No further telegram about Master Bob, Freeman?"

"No, sir, I was hup at the hoffice yesterday; and they 'ave not an ideer where the master is. They thought once they 'ad 'im; but they were mistook!"

"Oh, no matter; no matter," the Major would say. "Only I should be glad if he were home for Miss Mabel's wedding. If would be nice!"

"Very nice, hindeed, sir! I'm quite sure both Miss Mabel and Mr. Houtram will miss 'im very much!"

And Freeman moved the Major's couch as imperturbably as if he were the impersonation of truth.

"Look here, Freeman," the Major would cry, "that's all rot. That doesn't go down with me. Do you believe that either Miss Mabel or Outram would care one jot whether Bob Maxwell was at the marriage, or half-murdered down in a Kerry bog?"

"Well, sir, it's not for the likes of me to hoffer hopinions about those above us. But I thought you would ha' liked to be told that Mr. Maxwell was still hinterested in Miss Mabel."

"And do you think he is? Come now, do you honestly believe he is?"

"No, sir, I can't say as I do. When a genelman goes away, and leaves the young lady halone, and doesn't pay 'er those hattentions that young ladies hexpec's, well, then, he can't hexpect nothin' in return."

"I'm sorry for Bob Maxwell," said the Major, meditatively.

"So am I, sir!" said Freeman. "And so are we hall!"

"Why should you be sorry?" asked the Major.

"Because you see, sir, he's losing such a splendid gir — ahem — young lady; but we're sorry for Miss Mabel, too!"

"For Miss Mabel? Why should you be sorry for Miss Mabel?" queried the Major.

"Because we hall liked Mr. Maxwell, or Master Bob, sir! And because Mr. Houtram —"

Freeman suddenly stopped.

"Well, what about Mr. Outram?" sharply queried the Major.

"I beg your pardin, sir. I should not ha' mentioned Mr. Houtram's name."

"That's all right. But now you have mentioned it, what is it you were about to say?"

"Oh, nothink, sir, nothink at all. 'Tis not for the likes of me —"

"Stop that d——d rot, Freeman! You know me now too well to believe that kind of stuff. What were you about to say concerning Mr. Outram?"

"Oh, nothink, sir, nothink, hi hassure you. But we do be saying among ourselves, how it were well for young ladies to know hall about their hintendeds before taking the big plunge. The cook is agoin' to be married soon to a feller from Hindia —"

"Yes, I know, I know," interrupted the Major. "What has that to do with Mr. Outram?"

"Oh, nothink, sir, nothink; honly hi says to cook, says hi: 'You should know somethink habout the feller's hantecedents.' 'Oh,' sez she, 'the priest must see habout all that.' These poor Papists believe that their priests knows as much as Halmighty Gawd. 'That's hall right,' sez hi, 'but when the knot is tied, can the priest unloose hit?' 'No,' sez she, 'not on this side of the grave.' 'Well, then,' I sez, puttin' it plain like, 'if that feller has a girl or two abroad in Hindia or Haden, what can the priest do when you diskiver it?' 'Nothin',' sez she. 'Well, then', sez hi —"

"Look here, Freeman, I want no more of that d——d nonsense," interrupted the Major. "What has all this got to do with Mr. Outram?"

"Oh, nothink, sir, nothink," said Freeman. "We

don't know nothink about Mr. Houtram; leastways, we don't think as how Mr. Houtram — Mr. Houtram is a very nice gentelman, sir!"

"He is — very," said the Major. "When I ask your opinion about Mr. Outram, Freeman, you can give it."

"I'm sure, sir, I meant no offence. Leastways, I thought that, maybe, you would like to know what people think —"

"No; I can think for myself," replied the Major. "I don't want to hear kitchen gossip. There's always too much d——d nonsense and gossip going on downstairs. If we had less talk, we'd have better dinners."

"I'll tell cook so, sir," said Freeman, imperturbably. "You're quite right, sir. It's not the business of servants to discuss their superiors' affairs. Shall I move that couch, sir? A little towards the fire?"

And the Major was not quite sure whether he ought to fling a spittoon at the fellow's head, or offer him an increase of wages.

But he was much disquieted at what he had heard. Clearly, this forthcoming marriage was much discussed downstairs. Clearly, too, it was not highly approved of. There were little innuendoes about life abroad, which, to the Major, who had seen a good deal of Simla, meant a good deal. What if Outram had had a "past"? What if his reputation could not bear investigation? What if —

Yes; the Major was disquieted. But what could he do? Whom could he consult? There is the evil of being without friends in this world. For if friends are sometimes troublesome, and would like to share with you the material things of life, they are also useful, and may

sometimes give disinterested advice. You may have to pay for it in one shape or another; but, then, you must pay for everything worth having. The world is but a Chamber of Commerce, whether you play with counters or coins.

CHAPTER XV

A SICK CALL

THE man of the world, who is not a cynic at forty, must be a saint or a scoundrel. If he is the former, he condones all things on the principle of infinite pity. If the latter, he forgives everything on the grounds of universal depravity. But if he have no ear for the "still, sad music of humanity," and if he has not come to think, "what d——d beasts your godlike men can be," there must remain only a kind of mild cynicism, that contemns while it pardons.

Such was the frame of mind in which Hugh Hamberton came to Ireland. He had modified his ideas after three years' residence in what is called "the distressful country," so far that he still recognised the metaphysical possibility of distinterestedness and unselfishness, and, with this, the possibility, hitherto unimaginable, that he might yet have to change his entire estimate of human nature. He found it hard to understand how the lazy, thriftless, drunken Irish, as he had heard them described, could be the same as the quick, eager workers whom he employed; just as he found it hard to believe that the gloomy, rainy, wet-sodden, rain-soaked island could be the island of such idyllic graces and charms that many a time he thought he would not change his home to Capua or Sorrento, even if he had a mind. But it was in the matter of political,

or rather social, economy that his ideas had to submit themselves to the greatest revolution. It had become an article of faith with him that the one instinct of humanity, innate, irresistible, was that of "getting." No one was free from the low desire. From the child in its cradle, stretching out its little hands eagerly for the glass bead or piece of shining metal, to the capitalist who clutches his wealth, till it drops from his dead hands, it is all alike. Everywhere the passion for acquisition; everywhere the greed of gold; everywhere the reluctance to part with anything once acquired, except under the fierce grip of death. He remembered how often he had practised this little trick on his most intimate friends at dinner, or at a picnic. He would procure for them all the delicacies of the season; heap his table with costly and luxurious viands; order his footmen or waiters to uncork costly wines; draw out all the better elements of human nature under the influence of rich living, and high thinking; lead the conversation to high topics of literature, or science, or humanitarianism, or even religion; see the faces expanding and the eyes lighting and the smile mantling; and then — suddenly drop a hint of unsuccessful speculations, or banking perils, or rapid stock declensions; and it would be as if a ghost stood in their midst. Faces would lengthen and harden, his guests would shuffle in their chairs; they would look askance at one another, and suddenly shut themselves in silence. And Hamberton would smile and think: Yes; it is always and everywhere the same. Touch the spring and the harlequinade becomes a tragedy.

Here in Ireland all this was changed. These Irish

drove hard bargains at fair and market; were economical almost to miserliness in their homes; knew the value of a shilling as well as any other race; but he soon found that they lent at pleasure; that the poor farmers around were up to their necks in debt for each other in banks and loan offices. And here this old priest! Hamberton had taken him to his heart, because he was a priest — Hamberton, an agnostic, an infidel — and, in turn, the old priest had warmed towards this Englishman in a manner which was a daily surprise to himself. Hamberton was so straight, so matter-of-fact, so manly, so silent; he did such noble work in so unostentatious a manner, that often and often Father Cosgrove caught himself thinking, what a saint that man would be if he were a Catholic; and what a paradise would Ireland be, if we had everywhere such noble and sympathetic benefactors to our poor, struggling people. Yet the beautiful picture was dashed, as by a blur of blood, by one observation that Hamberton had once made in a moment of confidence and forgetfulness; and it was whilst pondering deeply on his words, and uttering a silent prayer in his heart, that he was suddenly summoned one night from his supper, and told that Pierce McAuliffe wanted to see him on urgent business. He was in the little parlour to the left of the hall, and had but to step into the hall to see his visitor.

"Well, Pierce, nothing wrong at Lisheen, I hope?" he said.

"Oh, yeh, no; nothin', yer reverence, than' God!" said Pierry.

"The old people all right?"

"Begor, they are, yer reverence," said Pierry, fumbling with his cap.

There was an awkward silence. Pierry turned his cap around several times, turned it inside out, examined the lining, looked around the hall, and at last peered through the parlour door.

"There's no one there," said Father Cosgrove. "What's the matter?"

"Sich a thing, yer reverence," said Pierry.

"What is it?" said the priest.

"The quarest thing you iver hard in yer life," said Pierry.

"Well, well, let's have it, whatever it is," said the priest.

"Begor, I don't know where to begin," said Pierry.

"Well, begin somewhere," said the priest a little impatiently. "Is it a sick call?"

"'Tis, an' it isn't, yer reverence," said Pierry.

"How can that be?" asked the priest. "You mean it isn't serious?"

"Well, 'tis serious enough," said Pierry, enjoying the mystery. "But yer reverence needn't bring anythin' wid you."

"That is to say, there's no need for anointing?"

"Divil a bit — I beg yer reverence's pardon — I mane, that's just it."

"The poor patient is not in danger of death then?"

"No; but he's bad enough," said Pierry.

"Well, then, I shall come prepared. One never knows what may be the condition of the patient."

"Ah, you needn't, yer reverence," said Pierry, smiling. "You won't anoint him."

"Oh, but I will though," said the priest. "That is, if I find there's danger."

And Father Cosgrove went away and Pierry remained in the hall grimly smiling. He would not practise the joke on other priests; but he knew the infinite patience and forbearance of Father Cosgrove.

When the latter came downstairs, Pierry began to think he had carried the joke far enough, so he said:

"I forgot to tell yer reverence, he's a Prodestan'."

"Oh!" said Father Cosgrove, buttoning his great-coat and looking dubiously at Pierry. "'Tis the strange boy at Lisheen?"

"'Tis, yer reverence."

"What have I to say to him?" said the priest. "He's not one of us."

"No, but he said he wanted to see yer reverence, and badly." Father Cosgrove reflected for a moment.

"I hope ye didn't put any notions in the boy's head?" he said. "Did he send for me, or have you come of yourself?"

"He sint for you himself," said Pierry. "He said: 'I wants to see that man.' Thims his very words."

"Then you were speaking about me?" said the priest.

"Begor, we wor; but we were sayin' nothin' bad about yer reverence," said Pierry.

The priest smiled.

"Very good," he said. "If the poor lad wants a word of comfort, why shouldn't I say it? You go on, Pierce, and say I'm coming."

It was very dark as he trudged along the moorland road that led to the house at Lisheen; and the soft mud created

by the late heavy rains splashed his boots and gaiters. But he was quite heedless of such things. His thoughts were with his Master; and, if they wandered from him, it was to stray towards the flock, of whom his care, though vicarious, was yet parental and pastoral. And he began to wonder how strange it was that his life should suddenly be linked with two souls not of his fold — Hamberton, a stranger and an agnostic, and this poor boy, who had come hither from unknown regions, and whose history was obscure, except for the conjectures that he was fleeing from justice and in hiding. He determined to be very cautious, to measure his words, and limit his visit to a few short moments of sympathy or help to a sick stranger. He should have known by experience that caution was not one of his many virtues; that he had all the impetuosity of charity, and that he believed, but would not acknowledge it, that the first thoughts are always thoughts of virtue; the second are the instincts of prudence and self.

"Your reverence is welcome," said the old vanithee, courtesying to the aged priest, as he entered with the salutation on his lips:

"God bless all here!"

After a few moments of kind inquiries, he asked to be shown the patient, and was ushered into the bedroom where Maxwell lay. The latter was much better, quite free from the dread, feverish feeling he had at first experienced, but still suffering from the violent pains in hands and feet. He looked at the old man, with that curious, half-wistful, half-fearful glance with which Protestants often regard the priest to whom they have had a first introduction — a glance that seems to say:

"I know you are a mysterious thing; whether good or ill I cannot say. But I crave your sympathy, if you are capable of such!"

"Well, my poor boy," said the kindly old man, "so you wished to see me? I hope you are feeling better."

"Much better, thank you," said Maxwell, in a tone of such stiffness that the priest began to think he was not wanted here; but had been the victim of a pious ruse. The answer sounded hard and metallic to his ears, accustomed as they were to the affectionate and caressing accents of his own people.

"You have been very unwell, I understand," said the priest.

"Very! It is a relapse, or repetition, of an old ailment," said Maxwell.

"Well, you must cheer up. Courage is half the battle," said Father Cosgrove. "I hope you have good attendance and every comfort."

"As much as human solicitude and every affectionate care could give," said Maxwell. "The doctor wanted to order me into the Workhouse Hospital; but they wouldn't allow it."

"God bless them!" said the priest. "They will have their reward. 'I was a stranger, and you took me in.' But, tell me, have you no friends, no relatives, parents, or a sister, to whom we could write, and let them know of your condition?"

"None! Absolutely none!" said Maxwell.

"You know you needn't be afraid of us," said the priest. "Your secret is safe in the keeping of these poor people. No one need ever know you are here, except you choose to reveal it!"

The words startled Maxwell. Had his secret been discovered? Did these people really know who he was? And, dreadful thought! was this the secret of all their kindness? The suggestion actually frightened him. It would have been such a revelation of human meanness, where he had seen but such noble excellence. But he might be mistaken. He began to feel his way cautiously.

"I have done nothing wrong," he said. "I have injured no man. If it pleased me to become a labouring man, had I not the right to do so?"

"Of course, of course," said the priest. "And, according to all accounts, you have been doing your duty faithfully and honestly. But you mightn't like the world to know you are here. There may be people looking for you and inquiring all about you; and you may prefer to remain where you are."

"I was not aware that I was an object of interest to any one," said Maxwell, now quite uneasy. "I suppose people will talk, and make all kinds of conjectures; but I don't heed, so long as I am let alone."

"Quite right! quite right! my boy," said the priest. "And perhaps, after all, the people are wrong in their thoughts about you."

"What do they think, Father?" said Maxwell.

It was the first time he used the word that means so much to the Irish peasant; and it almost choked him. But it softened yet more the heart of the good priest.

"Well, it is not right to tell, perhaps," he said, "and I hope you won't be offended, because the people regard the matter as a virtue, more than a crime. But they

have got it into their heads that you have been in the army."

"Yes?" said Maxwell, smiling.

"And that you have taken French leave," said the priest.

"Oh, yes; I guessed so much," said Maxwell. "Is that all?"

"That's all," said the priest. "And, as I tell you, the people consider it no great crime."

"Well, they're quite wrong," said Maxwell, simply. "I was never in her Majesty's service; and I am not fleeing from justice."

"That simplifies matters," said the priest. "And now why did you wish to see me?"

It was Maxwell's turn now to be puzzled. For the life of him, he could not express the sudden and singular emotion that made him yearn to see the face of this man. He blurted out:

"Things are lonely here, you know, Father. There is no minister of my own persuasion in the vicinity; and I was yearning for a word from a stranger, who might understand me. I hope I have not annoyed you."

"Not by any means, my dear boy," answered the priest. "As you say, we all covet human friendship, even of the humblest kind; and I shall be delighted to come, and come again, if you assure me I can be of any help. But you're sure you have every attention?"

"Quite sure. I'm on a milk diet; and that is easily procurable, although the poor people had to 'clear their manes,' as they say, by deporting their cattle to the mountain. And that young girl has a hand as light as a feather. No skilled nurse ever treated me so gently."

"Yes, God will bless them!" said the priest, fervently. "He always does, even in this world. Poor people! their trials only increase their sympathies."

"So you will come?" said Maxwell, anxiously. And, as the priest nodded, he continued:

"And some day I shall tell you my secret; and you will help me?"

"I have so many secrets burthening me," said the priest, "I don't care for more. But if I can help, I will."

"For your people's sake," said Maxwell, extending his hot hand.

And the priest marvelled much; for were not these the exact words with which Hugh Hamberton solicited his visits to his own house?

of married life. There, now! Forgive me! I must not depress you. No fear, I hear you say. Nothing can depress me. I know it well; and hence do I write in answer to your request; but in terms which would kill another girl; but at which you will merely smile.

But I must answer your conundrum. Of course, it will answer itself by and by; but I cannot deprive myself of the pleasure of saying some far-off day when we meet: *I told you!*

And now, dearest, sweetest little Mab, I'll tell you all about it. Hitherto, you have been a child, a spectator, down there in the pit, or in some cosey box, calmly munching caramels, or grapes, and watching the little drama on the stage. Doubtless, you have often thought how much nicer it would be to go up and mingle, as one of themselves, with all the knights and kings and princesses and heroines behind the footlights. You are quite wrong; but, *Che sarà, sarà.* You have envied the princess and the priestess and the shepherd girl and the heroine. You have uttered the fatal wish; and, lo! you are in the green-room, far behind the scenes and lights, and all is revealed. Yes; there are the supers and the attendants and the prompter and the dresser. There are the pulleys and the ropes The golden helmet on King Arthur is tinsel and his shining breastplate of steel is but paper; and his sword, Excalibur, is a painted lath. The awful thunder is hidden in yonder tray; and the lightning in that paper of magnesia. And all the princes and princesses are in *déshabille*, sitting idly on the stage properties, talking scandal and drinking *eau-de-vie.* Yonder Sir Galahad is flirting with Elaine; and Vivien is cajoling some aged Merlin, not for his secret magic, but for his money. For all things begin, and end, here. You did not expect this. No, dearest, of course not; nor do you believe it now. You think me an old, croaking raven, unprophetic, but for the fatal Nevermore! Ah, yes; that Nevermore! It means you cannot go back to the stalls or box again — never again be a spectator of the mighty drama. Only an actor. That is, hide as you like between old trunks and canvasses, there goes the manager's call; and you must come out, and show yourself and play your part before the footlights. There is no shirking the duty — "Breaking heart," "scalding tears," "wounded pride," "lost opportunities"

— you cannot, you dare not plead such things. Dry your eyes, and compose your features, little Mab, and step gaily forth from the wings. Play well your part in the little drama. Be proud and haughty and disdainful. Be cold as ice and supercilious as — Mephisto. Contemn all things and all persons; and the audience will worship you. The world likes to be despised. Envious eyes will watch you through opera glasses to detect a flaw in your costume, a blur in your accent, a spot on your hands or face. Be perfect and despise them. They will repay you with envy; and what more can human heart desire? Play well your part. Life is but a drama; and no one can ask of maid or mortal to do more.

But, when you go back to the dressing-room — there, I shall say no more. I have said too much. And, *Che sarà, sarà.*

I am wondering whether your future husband is the delicate boy I used to know long ago — Bob, Bob, Bob Something! I remember how you used to tease him, ridicule his little peace-offerings, laugh at his moodiness, and call him back with a word or look. Well, do you know, dear Mab, I liked him. The boy had a heart that could love; and that is something, if the thing is not petrified long ago by contact with the world. I think my little Mab would be happy with him, unless, unless — shall I say it? — she would practise too frequently, once too frequently, her little caprices and wiles, and then? There are some natures that bear and bear and forbear, apparently forever, the little frictions of life; and show no more heat or fire than a piece of sandal-wood. And then, one day they flare up suddenly into a huge blaze of passion; and then die out sadly into little embers and ashes. And I think Bob, Bob, Bob What's His Name? is one of those. But I don't know.

Mab, dearest little Mab, if you will marry, marry a tow-headed curate, who hasn't a particle of brains and but £80 a year, and you will be happy.

You won't cut a figure in society; but, with your chickens and vegetables and babies and the love of an honest man, you will be happy. But who wants to be happy? No one. At least, I see half the world throwing happiness to the winds.

I am sending you a little Indian present. I hope it will not be broken *en route*. And I shall await, with much hope, your account of the ceremony. Please write it in your most vigorous and epigrammatic style, for the hot season is with us yet; and we haven't had news of a single scandal from Simla or Peshawur for ever so long. And tell me all that was said and what every one wore. I know you will keep your head and notice things. And tell me all the banalities that shall be uttered for long life and happiness, etc.; and where you go for your honeymoon; and how you played your part as a much married woman, and not a baby-bride of yesterday; and how you stood the shock of intimacy, and the revelations of the new being, whose life for evermore is inextricably linked with yours. Yes, yes; these poor benighted Papists, wrong in nearly everything else, are right in holding that marriage tie inviolable. Nay; there should be a strict law that marriage shall not be dissolved in death; because it is enough for each human being to have one world revealed, and no more. My! How I do run on! And I'm sure I'm forgetting lots of things that I want to say; and there will be no opportunity for another letter. Oh, yes; don't let that most detestable Wedding March be played! It is an abominable sacrilege on such an occasion. Get the organist to play an "Ava Maria," or a sonata, or something, lest, when looking back, after many years, you should say: "Woe! woe! Marriage bells mark the time of a departing soul." But, oh, me! I am writing such a depressing letter; and I know it ought to be all congratulations and rejoicings. Put it down, dear, to the awful climate, and our wretched livers, and believe me always,

Cara, Carissima, yours,
EDITH CHISHOLM.

P. S. — I have absolutely sent you no news. But there is none to send. The same daily routine. You can guess its dull, dread monotony. Up before dawn — the only time of day and night when we can be said to live, for the air is crisp and light, and breathable. Tea and muffins at 6 A.M. Such little work as we need here — tending the few flowers beneath the veranda and reading some

trashy novel. Then, up comes Sol, red, angry, and threatening, making all the heavens blood and fire. Henceforward, no peace, no mercy from the Day God. Good Heavens! to read these mad poets about pink-fingered dawns, when the dawn is a fiery furnace, heated seven times over as the bad king did for the three children. And all day long and all night suffocation, relieved by the creaking of the punkah-pulleys, and copious draughts of lemonade. How I envy you your Irish climate, with its quiet autumn splendours and mild wet winters. How I long for the cool, sweet, Irish rains that fall so noiselessly, unlike the angry deluges here! And your cosey winter firesides, etc., etc. There is no news. Oh, yes; do you remember that semi-brunette, Gerty Richards? Well, they say she is engaged to Lieutenant Whitbread. I don't believe it, although I knew he would be a catch. He has but two lives between him and ten thousand a year in England; and one of these is an idiot. There is some talk of the Collector General being recalled — something about accounts, which we poor women cannot understand. We know enough — too much, God knows! And one thing I know well is, that I love you, dear little Mab, dearly, and wish you all bliss and happiness.

P. P. S. — I read this letter over, a thing I never do; and I had a hundred thoughts to tear it up. What right have I, I said, to send such a jeremiad to a young girl? But then — well, then, I close it with a few bitter tears. It is the climate, dearest. Please believe so, and say so to yourself. What a dreadful Slough of Despond India must be, when Edith could write me such a letter. That's just it. Forgive it all, forgive it all, little one; and be happy, happy, happy!

E. C.

CHAPTER XVII

VISITORS AT LISHEEN

A FEW days after the priest's visit, the little household at Lisheen were startled by the sudden appearance in the farm-yard of a lady and gentleman, evidently of superior station in life. They first guessed it was a landlord apparition; but this idea was quickly dispelled, when the strangers declared they had come to visit the sick man, who had found refuge with the humble cottiers. Bob Maxwell, convalescent, was sitting by the kitchen fire, his hands still swathed in cotton wool, when he heard himself suddenly accosted by Hugh Hamberton:

"Well, my man, and how are you? Had a bad time, eh?"

Maxwell rose with some pain and confronted his visitors. He felt the least touch of resentment at being addressed so abruptly, and was about to answer coldly, when his eyes fell on Claire Moulton, who stood beside her guardian. She was clad in her usual simple fashion; and the long, black cloak, clasped at the throat with some fine silver ornament, revealed her tall, shapely figure. The silk-lined hood was flung back on her shoulders, so that her head was bare, but for the coronal of hair that crowned it. She looked anxiously at Maxwell; and the interest he excited gave a new animation to her features, which

glowed from the fresh air and the soft winds that had played around them during their long drive.

Maxwell was sorely puzzled. At once he divined that they belonged to his own class in life; but the simple, peasant dress of the young lady led him to think that perhaps they belonged to the better farming class, who come under the title of "gentlemen farmers." However, there was no mistake about one thing. Here were interesting visitors, and they manifested much concern about him.

"Yes," he said, "I have been very unwell. It was a renewal of an old malady, caught in a severe wetting."

"So we heard," said Hamberton, surprised at the calm, easy independence with which Maxwell addressed him. "These things are not easily eliminated, and not easily avoided, as we old duffers know. But you had careful nursing?"

Hamberton looked around at the poor place, and at the men. Claire's eyes rested on the face of Debbie McAuliffe, which just then wore a strong air of resentment.

"I shouldn't be alive to-day, had I not," said Maxwell. "I can never thank these good people enough for all their kindness to me."

"So we heard, so we heard," said Hamberton. "If ever I get unwell, you must lend me your young nurse here. There is more in kindness than in skill. But, look here, you are now convalescent, and you need sea air. Come over to us at Brandon Hall, and we'll nurse you back to health again."

Maxwell shook his head; and yet the thought of being nursed by such a dainty figure as Claire Moulton was a temptation.

"I am bound to these good people," he said. "They could have sent me out on the world to die, and no one could blame them. They kept me here in spite of doctor's solicitations and their own interests. I am happy with them. There is no place where I can attain to health or happiness so easily as here. That is," he added, looking around, "until they turn me out."

The dark shadow that had fallen on Debbie's face whilst Hambèrton proffered his invitation now lifted, and she actually laughed with joy at Maxwell's choice.

"Ah, I see," said Hamberton, "ye want to keep all the charity of the world to yourselves. Now, that's not fair. Here am I, anxious to do a little good in this queer world while I am in it, and you won't let me. What do you say now, ma'am?" he suddenly cried, addressing the old woman. "Wouldn't it be only fair, when you all have done your share towards this poor fellow, to allow us to have a hand in working him back to life and health?"

"Faix, I don't know, sir," said Mrs. McAuliffe. "Sure, 'tis rale good of you to think of such a thing at all, at all; and we all such black strangers to your honour."

"Never mind that," said Hamberton, in his brusque English manner. "Never mind that. Here's what I propose. I have an empty cottage over there at Brandon Hall. You know where Brandon Hall is?"

"We never hard of it, sir," said Owen McAuliffe.

"You did, Father," said Pierce, breaking in for the first time. "Sure everybody knows the place where the people are getting sich fine wages, and have sich fine houses."

"I never hard of it before," said the old man. And Debbie darted a look of fierce anger at her brother.

"Well, now, your son — I presume he is your son," replied Hamberton — "knows all about us; and that we are not such bad folk. Now, if you will allow this poor fellow to come to us for a few weeks, we will put him in that cottage, give him all he requires, nurse him back to health again. What do you say?"

"The poor fellow, about whom you are so anxious," said Maxwell, with a slight accent of resentment, "has already notified you of his intentions. It remains for these good people to say whether they wish me to remain here or not!"

"Oh, I meant no offence," said Hamberton, seeing Maxwell bridle up, "I assure you. I just want to do all I can in this distressful world while I'm in it; and I just heard there was a fellow-countryman of mine here in some trouble, and thought I could help him. And Miss Moulton here, my ward, was equally anxious. Of course, we know that everything has been done for you that could be done; but we just thought, that is, Miss Moulton and I thought, that perhaps you would come around quicker with us."

"Yes," said Claire Moulton, speaking for the first time, "that's just it. We simply want to help on a bit; and we English have a feeling for a fellow-countryman in distress. We wish you would allow us to help you. We do, indeed."

It was tempting, was it not? To be near the sea, to see its ripples, to hear its musical and melancholy wash, to breathe its odours, to feel its invigorating influence; and, then, to be nursed back to convalescence by such amiable and interesting people — surely, it was not in

human nature, least of all in the heart of a solitary man, to refuse. And, then! This man, of whom he had never heard before, was a philanthropist. From what Pierry had said it was clear that he had brought a new soul into his own neighbourhood; that he was one of nature's workers, who would clear the bog and sweeten the fen and drain the moorland, and lift the people out of the Slough of Despond; and be, in fact, a man of light and leading to himself. And there was no doubt, so Maxwell swiftly admitted to himself, that hitherto his own mission had been a failure. He had suffered, but effected nothing; and where's the use in needless suffering, where no results come forth? What if he joined hands with this powerful man, this bright and cheerful girl, and, revealing his own wishes, enlist them in the same sacred cause? But, then!

He looked away from Claire Moulton's face and saw Debbie McAuliffe's, silent, pallid, suffering. He saw the old woman wiping away a secret tear with her check apron; and he made up his mind.

"I'm sure," he said, "I am deeply obliged for your kindness. But I am not a fellow-countryman. I am an Irishman. And I am not in distress. I am poor; but I have wanted for nothing. And no rich man can boast of more. I am happy with these good people; and have no wish to change."

Claire was looking wistfully at him. He felt her eyes pleading with him. But he was firm.

"Well," said Hamberton, "we're disappointed; and you are, like all your countrymen, a fool to throw away a splendid offer of a new home, good wages, light work —"

He felt Claire's hand on his arm, and was suddenly silent. She interposed.

"You will allow us to call again?" she said to Debbie, who was staring angrily through the open door. "We sometimes drive around here, and would like to see you all again, if we may?"

The girl was silent. The mother spoke.

"Wisha, sure, Miss, we'll be glad to see you, and welcome at all times. 'Tis good of you to come so far and see a poor boy, who has nayther father, nor mother, nor home to go. You'll be welcome, Miss, at all times to us, like all other dacent, honest people."

"Well, then, we'll say good-bye!" said Hamberton. "Should you change your mind," he continued, addressing Maxwell, "just drop a note to Mr. Hamberton, Brandon Hall; or, better still, walk over. 'Tis only about seven or eight miles from here; and we'll put you up."

"Thank you!" said Maxwell, curtly. And after a smile from Claire Moulton, and a deep courtesy from Mrs. McAuliffe, the visitors left the cabin. Debbie stood like a statue, and made no sign, and spoke no word of farewell.

Guardian and ward had driven a mile or so in silence before the latter said:

"You see, Uncle, Father Cosgrove was right. There is some virtue in the world."

"Yes, by Jove!" he replied, "there is. What a strange people! To take in a tramp, a beggar, and keep him and nurse him through a dangerous illness, without hope of recompense! Yes: there is a little hope yet for this most disastrous world."

"You'll have to make a humble admission of your incredulity and conversion," said Claire Moulton.

"Yes, I will," he said. "The priest is right, even though this is probably the only case to be found in the world. This is genuine though. No hypocrisy or deception there."

"None whatever," said his ward, smiling. "The people are transparent as glass. They have not learned the tricks of the world. Did you notice that young girl?"

"N — no, not particularly!" said Hamberton. "She struck me as a strong, buxom, country wench; and no more."

"She stabbed me with her eyes while you were speaking," said his ward. "I think she is interested in that boy."

"No, no," cried Hamberton. "These Irish are as proud as Spaniards, from whom they trace their blood; and the daughter of a farmer would no more marry a labouring man than a baron would marry a kitchen wench. And this man from whom we have got such a cold shoulder is but a farm hand, and, from what we have heard, a tramp."

Claire Moulton was now silent. They drove rapidly homeward and talked of other things. It was only after dinner that she asked her guardian if he believed that Maxwell was but a farm hand or a tramp.

"'Pon my soul, Claire, I think you are interested in the fellow. Are you now?"

"There are others more interested than I," she said.

"You mean the family, the people who have housed him?"

"Yes," she said.

"Of course they are. We saw that. But what do you mean?"

"I mean that I think you have still the victory over Mr. Cosgrove. That man is a gentleman; *and they know it.*"

Hamberton was slow to grasp her meaning. When he did, he stared at her blankly for a moment, and said:

"Good God! what moles we are compared with women! But, why do you say so, Claire? I could see no marks of that."

"If he were a soldier," said Claire, "he would have straightened himself and stood to attention. If he were a workman, he would have said, sir. He spoke to you as an equal, did he not?"

"By Jove, yes," said Hamberton. "And, what is more, he had the address and language of a gentleman. But, no; that's impossible! What, in heaven's name, would bring a gentleman there?"

"That's a mystery," said his ward, "which time will unravel. But you have the victory over Mr. Cosgrove so far."

"True. And the thing is interesting in itself, is it not? We must watch the development of it. It is something to have a mystery to unravel so near us. But, everything is a mystery and a paradox in Ireland. We shall go there again soon. Shall we not?"

"I won't," said Claire.

"Won't? You will. Or I shall say you are jealous of that little country girl. No; not jealous, but afraid."

"Very well, I will," said Claire. "The thing may be interesting. Whatever the man is, there is a story somewhere in his life; and I am getting tired of Ned Galwey and his potatoes."

Which allusion will be explained in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER XVIII

TESTING FOR GOLD

THE anticipated victory over Father Cosgrove had its origin in one of those frequent conversations between himself and Hamberton that went on at Brandon Hall. Nothing pleased the cynical Englishman more than refuting the optimism of the humble priest, who saw all things in the mirror of his own guilelessness and self-effacement. Many a debate, that would have been heated but for the gentleness of the old priest and the laughter of Claire Moulton, took place as to whether pure disinterestedness could exist in this world, and under the ordinary conditions of humanity. For a long time the priest had the victory in the very immediacy of Hamberton's own workmen, who had been loyal and obedient and faithful, not so much from a sense of the profits that might accrue, as from gratitude to so excellent a benefactor.

"Psha!" Hamberton would cry, "the fellows would turn against me to-morrow if another employer came who would offer them a shilling a week more. They know they can't do better. Gratitude? There's no such thing!"

"Well, I misunderstand them very much if that is the case," said the priest. "I go amongst them a good deal; and, believe me, if you needed it, there are a hundred

willing hands at your command. As for Miss Moulton, you know her presence is a sunbeam in the poorest cottage."

"For what she brings!" said Hamberton.

"No, no, if she came empty-handed, she would be just as welcome. Is this not so, Miss Moulton?"

"It is so, Father. Uncle is wrong, all wrong. I'm sure the people are not grasping. At least, I should be much disappointed if I found it otherwise."

"And you will find it," said Hamberton.

"Never! never!" Father Cosgrove said emphatically. "The day Miss Moulton's shadow shall not be welcome across every threshold in this parish I shall despair."

"We shall see," said Hamberton. Swiftly and suddenly came his prophecy and his justification.

He was, as we have said, much in the habit of searching for minerals, and picking up bits of quartz, etc., in which might be a possibility of gold. And a few times he journeyed to London to have these specimens tested. This did not escape the sharp eyes of his workmen, who at once attributed their own unusual wages to the fact that Hamberton had found gold, and "was coining." The marbles, they argued, bits of coloured stone, could not pay him; nor could any explanation of his presence on this wild Kerry coast, and his munificence to themselves, be found, but in the fact that he had discovered some auriferous vein, and was secretly working it. These poor workers had as poor an opinion of human nature as Hamberton himself. They would have killed with scorn the idea that any man could do good from purely philanthropic motives. Their school had been a hard

one; and there had been no place for high or generous estimates of their kind.

The ring-leader in this new suspicious movement towards Hamberton was a small farmer and day-labourer named Ned Galwey — a knowledgeable man, because he had been at a Kerry hedge-school and could say the answering at Mass. 'Tis quite true his quantities were not always correct, and he had a tendency to mix Irish and Latin together. But he was the "best ejjicated" man in the townland, and there was considerable deference for his opinion. Ned had watched with shrewd, suspicious eyes the taste Hamberton had manifested for certain pieces of rock, and certain kinds of gravel; and he concluded that the "masther" was finding gold and secretly amassing a huge fortune. And what were their wages? In one sense good; but, relatively to the vast wealth Hamberton was secretly accumulating, simply a mere pittance. He brooded over the matter a long time, whispered his suspicions to others; and then, unknown even to his confederates, he made several careful assays himself.

He secreted a large quantity of gravel, and took it by night to a lonely spot where a clear, mountain stream rolled down amongst grasses and hardy ferns, until it lost itself in the sea. In the deep midnight, and lighted only by a dim stable lantern, he washed the red gravel, eagerly looking for some dim specks that would reveal the presence of gold. Alas! nothing remained but a little red mud, that refused to scintillate in the light.

Then he got some quartz and broke it into powder in his back yard, his good wife wondering what he was

searching for. This, too, was a failure. A couple of flakes of some glinting material, that looked like glass, and this was all. The dream of untold wealth had vanished from his eyes, only to make him more and more certain that Hamberton held the secret. So, by degrees, many murmurings were heard, as the disaffection gained ground, and the belief in Hamberton's millions held them spellbound.

He listened patiently and said nothing; but, like a calm Englishman, he made inquiries, and found that that unsuccessful miner, Ned Galwey, was at the bottom of the discontent that now raged amongst his people. He also heard — there is a traitor in every camp — of Ned's unsuccessful assaying for gold; and he took his revenge.

In the hearing of a young son of Ned's — a little fellow, cute as a fox and cunning as a weasel — he threw out a hint that, unless the quartz were boiled down until every grain of earth or clay were eliminated, and unless the gravel were similarly boiled in a leathern bag, the gold would refuse to appear. The hint was taken; and Ned's poor wife had hard times during the next few weeks to boil the potatoes and cabbage for the midday dinner, while Ned's stout pots were simmering with huge deposits of quartz and gravel.

Hamberton waited for a few days; and then strolled in, as was his wont, and talked to the cottagers in his easy, familiar style — talked about the weather and the crops and the hay and the potatoes.

"By the way, Mrs. Galwey," he cried, going over and stirring with the ferule on his cane the huge masses of quartz that were being boiled in one of the largest pots,

"I heard that you had excellent potatoes. These they?"

"Yes, your 'anner," said the poor woman. "They're wanderful intirely this year, Glory be to God!"

"They look nice and floury," Hamberton said. "But they seem rather hard."

"They'll come all right when they're well biled," said Ned, looking suspiciously at Hamberton out of the corners of his eyes.

"And this," said Hamberton, stirring up the bag which, in another pot, held the auriferous gravel, "a leg of mutton, by Jove! That's right! That's just what we want! I can boast now, like the French king, that there is a fowl or something better in every pot in my little kingdom."

"God bless your 'anner. Sure, 'tis to you and to the grate God we owe everything."

Hamberton should bring Claire to see the wonderful prosperity of his people. The pots were still simmering.

"Look here, Claire, look at this," he cried, again stirring up the quartz, "look at these for potatoes!"

"They are not potatoes!" said Claire Moulton, who was not in the joke. "They seem hard as stones."

"An' sure they are shtones, me lady," said Mrs. Galwey. "Sure, we left the masther have his little joke about potatoes, and the King of France, and every wan with a chicken in his pot. Them's only chanies that Ned does be clanin' to put on the dhresser, or outside on the wall."

"The devil!" said Hamberton. "And the leg of mutton? I suppose that's meal for the chickens?"

"Yerra, no, yer 'anner; sure you're innicent. That's

only a little sand up from the sayshore that Ned does be screenin' to make cimment for the little piggery outside!"

Hamberton laughed quietly; but he spread the story far and wide amongst the men, about Ned Galwey boiling quartz for chanies and boiling gravel for cement. The rest were not slow to understand; and public opinion veered around, and set steadily against avaricious Ned. And he had to stand a running fire of questions ever after; for the Irish are unrelenting when they have turned a joke against some poor victim.

"Yerra, Ned, are the praties biled a-yet?"

"Yerra, Ned, when will ye be axin' us up to ate that leg of mutton wid ye?"

"Begor, we know who's coinin'. 'Tisn't crocks of goold, but rocks of goold we're afther findin' nowadays."

"Well, Mary" — to the wife — "plase God, we'll see you, one of these days, rowlin' in yer carridge and pair."

"Wisha, thin, sure 'tis we don't begridge you yer good fortune. Sure ye airned it hard, stirrin' and bilin' and rinsin' night after night. 'Tis the divil's own work to get at that same goold; and, sure, whin ye have it, little good it is, they say."

Father Cosgrove was taken into the confidence of Hamberton; but only half-way. In his simple, guileless fashion he believed that his poor parishioners had received a sudden accession of wealth, and he was genuinely glad of it.

"I'm delighted to hear ye have come in for somethin' good," he said to Mrs. Galwey.

"Yerra, no, yer reverence," the poor woman would say, "but they must be afther havin' their jokes."

"But all this golden quartz and gravel that Ned has been breakin' up! I believe Mr. Hamberton thought they were potatoes."

"His 'anner is fond of his fun wid poor people," she would reply. "And, sure, we're depindin' on him, and can't say a word agin' him."

And they didn't. They saw the "masther" was no joke; and that there was pretty deep meaning in his jesting. And he would have punished Ned Galwey severely, but that he argued, in his own cynical way: He's no worse than every one else! Poor devil! What is he doing, but what every capitalist and speculator is doing the wide world over?

But the discontent and conspiracy were at an end. They were killed by the practical jest.

"These Irish are like the Jacobins," said Hamberton. "A clever *mot* will always pull down the barricades."

But it gave him the text for a little homily which he preached at Father Cosgrove some time after.

"There are two classes of men in the world, Rev. dear Father, that are intolerable — preachers and novelists. The former, because they teach a religion whose practices they know to be impossible; the latter, because they paint an ideal world, a Utopia of morality and goodness and benevolence, which never existed and never could exist. Every sensible man knows that the real and only business of life is getting something — pleasure, profit, revenge, victory; a wife, her money, large dividends, broad acres, your enemies under your feet, your friends fearing you and depending on you. Now, when we all know this to be the sum and aim of all human existence,

why will a certain class of men in snowy surplices take to telling us that this — the fact that stares us all in the face — is a delusion, that it does not exist? What would we do with a man that would tell us the sun doesn't shine at midday, nor the stars at night; that fire doesn't burn, and cold doesn't freeze? Clap a strait-jacket on him. And that's just what I'd do with all preachers. Strip them, unfrock them, as good Queen Bess did; and clap on the strait-jacket. But these confounded day-dreamers and romancers are worse. They pretend that such a cloud-world is realized in everyday life; they give the credulous world pictures of pure attachment, generous deeds, high motives, sincerity, honour, which every one knows cannot, and do not, exist. What is the result? Plainly, that the young and unsophisticated, instead of being taught the terrible truths of existence, go out as day-dreamers into a hard and terrible world; and have to learn by bitter, personal experience that what their romancers taught them is all a lie. And 'tis all the same and everywhere the same. London broker and Kerry peasant, American trust-thief and Ned Galwey — 'tis all the same. By the way, I'll break that fellow, I think!"

"No, no, you mustn't," said Father Cosgrove. "He has a big family and is not a bad fellow at heart."

"Certainly not. A first-rate fellow, until he was bitten by the mad dog. Well, for your sake, I'll give him a chance. But don't speak of disinterestedness again. There's no such thing."

"There is, there is, there is," said Father Cosgrove triumphantly, at which Hamberton bent his eyebrows and Claire Moulton laughed.

"Another mare's nest? O man, great is thy faith!" said Hamberton.

"What would you think, now, of a family in this parish," said Father Cosgrove, "in this parish," he continued slowly, trying to make his description graphic, "and within a few miles from here — a poor family, a very poor family, whose cattle had been seized for rent, or rather driven away, lest they should be seized —"

"That's better," said Hamberton. "Go on!"

"Well, this family, rack-rented, poor, distrained, took in a poor fellow, a wandering tramp from nobody knew where, fed him, clothed him; and when he was sick, as he was lately, nursed him, and wouldn't allow him to go to the Workhouse Hospital — wouldn't allow him to go to the Workhouse Hospital, although he had fever — 'twas only rheumatic, but still it was fever — defied doctor, nursed him themselves through all that *fever*, stayed up at night with him, and — and — and —"

"Were well paid in the long run, I bet," said Hamberton.

"Paid? How could he pay? A tramp, a beggar, and an Englishman," said Father Cosgrove.

"That caps the climax," said Hamberton. "When they could take an Englishman to their heart, they must be Gospel Christians in very deed."

"Well, see for yourself," said the priest. "And, mind you, these poor people had to get milk for that poor fellow down from where their cows were hidden on the mountain. And, mind you, they hardly know his name; and they certainly don't know where he came from."

"Have they no suspicion?" said Hamberton.

"Suspicion? Yes; but only suspicion. They think he is a deserter from the army!"

"Hallo! That explains it," said Hamberton. "There always is an explanation. They are 'agin the government'; and it is a satisfaction to know they are sheltering a rebel. There it is, always something besides real sympathy and love. But we must see our fellow-countryman, Claire, and bring him over here. There's an empty cottage down there near that scoundrel's, Ned Galwey; and we'll put him there, and he can keep a watch on Ned's prospecting. I'll give that fellow one chance for your sake, Father; but if I find him tampering with the men, I'll certainly dismiss him. By the way, where does this model family live?"

"At Lisheen, about six miles to the east of this. You'll find what I say is right."

"Very good, *mon père*, we'll give you every chance to prove your optimism. Lisheen! Lisheen! Claire, remember the name!"

Well she did remember it. They visited Lisheen, with the result we have described.

CHAPTER XIX

A LETTER FROM IRELAND

DUBLIN, December 12, 18—.

DEAREST EDITH: I have been in the green-room, and have seen it all, just as you describe; but I have not seen the awful banalities you imagine. And I have been on the stage — a little — and I think, but I must not be too sure as yet, until I have heard the critics, that I performed my little part fairly well. The audience was vulgar enough, loudly-dressed and vacantly staring. My six bridesmaids were under sixteen — this I insisted upon; four were under twelve. They haven't bitten the apple of the Tree of Life as yet, and are still in their primeval innocence. But Maud Beresford kissed me, which is a good sign; and others, some not in my hearing, but all things return, nodded and whispered: "An' if she knew"; and, "Was that a wedding-bell or a passing-bell?" And one said: "Pride goeth before a fall"; from all which you will conjecture, dearest, that my *début* on the stage of married life was a fair success. At least, I like it. The prompter's call has no terrors for me; and I think my complexion stands well the footlights. No; I have not the slightest desire to go back to those lonely and stupid boxes again. I have gone beyond the caramels and the sugared lemons; and I was tired of mere staring and wondering. "Give me action, action," was the cry of my heart; and my cry has been heard; and it shall go ill with me if I do not perform my part so well as to excite the admiration of my friends, the spleen of my enemies; and what more can human female heart desire?

But to drop metaphor — you led me into the detestable habit — why did you write me such a doleful, lugubrious letter? If it were written from foggy London — where we have just been, the fog

yellow as the Tiber and thick as the darkness of Egypt — I could understand it. Everything is thick and heavy there; and the atmosphere clogs the ink in the pen, and the thoughts in the brain; and Puck could not be merry. But to get such a letter as yours from "India's coral strand," from the land of shining pagodas and skies of eternal blue — it was a profanation. Rainy reasons and steaming grasses and tropical heats won't explain it. What is it, dearest Edith? There is a note of sadness, even of despair, running through it all. Surely your life is not unhappy. I cannot think it. You — who were so jolly, so careless, so light-hearted — to send me, and on such an occasion, so terrible a forecast! Write again, dearest Edith, and say you retract it all, that it was all a horrible blunder, brought on by the heat depression. Or else I shall never allow Ralph to return to India. But I haven't told you about Ralph. Don't start at the name. The boy you mentioned — he was but a boy, compared with Ralph — took a mild attack of insanity, a strange weird delusion, from excessive reading and poring over nonsensical books; and has gone down to the south of Ireland on some Quixotic expedition, from which it is expected he cannot return alive. I did him no injustice, I assure you. I warned him again and again to beware of ideas that, however nice they may seem in books, are never adopted in life, except within the walls of an asylum. It was no use. He would see for himself. He calmly dropped me, without a word of explanation, and went his way. When people marry an idea, they cannot wed a wife. Otherwise there would be incompatibility of temper, etc., which we read of in the courts.

Now, Ralph Outram — that's my dear husband's name — Ralph Outram, C.B., late of the Indian Service, has no ideas; and he is an archangel. He has mounted up, step by step, in the official and social ladder, until he has very nearly reached the top; and thence he has stooped down and drawn up little me! The height is dizzy; but I keep my head. We had a delightful few weeks in London, where he seemed to know every one, even the proletariat, for some queer people called at our hotel to see him, but he drew the line sharply at these. We had quite a round of parties, theatres, and then we ran down to a quiet seaside place called Littlehampton,

away from the big, noisy world, and this was delectable. Not that I dislike the big, noisy world; oh, no; it is all right, especially when one can look the thing steadily in the face. But for one, just — well, off the stage, a little retirement away from the glare is sometimes welcome. But Ralph is an angel. Ever so considerate and kind and gentle; he has a strong side, too, to his character. He says all old Indians have. They must have from their intercourse with natives. One little instance gave me a shock, but filled me with admiration for such a great, strong protector. One of the proletariat (Ralph always calls them thus) presumed too much, and became offensive. Ralph was infinitely tolerant. Then he took the fellow, as if he were a child, in his arms, and dropped him into the area of the hotel. It was the evening we left London for Littlehampton.

And now one word about my little presents: They were many — I send you the *Irish Times* by this mail, as I cannot recount them in a letter — and beautiful. Very beautiful and very costly. One species was absent, and I thanked heaven. The vile, the detestably vulgar, cheque. It is one of the most dread signs of modern decadence. Ralph cannot see it. But men look at these things so differently; and I shall educate him. But how shall I thank you, dearest Edith, for your Indian present? I assure you its beauty took away my breath. The intense polish of the porphyry vase — it is porphyry, is it not? — the perfect outline and finish, and the sudden contrast with the little green, coiled cobra at the bottom, gave me a start of surprise, which soon yielded to pleasure. One vulgar woman declared she saw a fac-simile, but on a much larger scale, at Chatsworth; but this was a little feminine boasting. No; there's nothing like it in the world. So every one says. One or two affected creatures pretended, while admiring the exquisite vase, to have received a sudden shock when they saw the beautiful reptile. But this was an affectation. And some tried to make it a sign of something — a hint, an indication! But this, of course, is absurd. There it remains, until I shall create for it a special place in my new drawing-room. Your lovely card that was in it Ralph picked up and kept as a talisman, he said, because you wrote in his beloved Sanskrit. He won't tell me what it is, except good wishes and all

forms of Oriental and fanciful felicitations. Some day, dearest, when you have returned home, we shall talk the whole thing over, and you will translate the beautiful poetry for me.

One little drawback I must mention. Poor father, in his failing health, was depressed about it all. He couldn't come to church, his feet are so swollen; but he has been extremely kind. Somehow — there! I must tell you everything, the golds and the grays mix themselves up so much in life — I fear he set his heart too much on my marriage with Bob Maxwell — the young fanatic, who has lost his head about Socialistic theories, etc. — and I know he was hoping up to the last moment to have heard tidings of him. Not that it would matter much. I had long ago made up my mind that I would follow my star; and that no girlish or parental caprice should deter me. I knew I had a destiny, and that I must fulfil it. But poor Pap had set his heart on Bob — his father was an old military comrade — and sometimes he looks depressed and sad, and murmurs: "Poor Bob! Poor Bob!" Ralph is highly amused; and repeats: "Poor Bob! Poor Bob!" until I have to laugh. "Bob must gang his own gait," he says; "I only wish I had my ring back." This was a talismanic ring, given Ralph by a Brahmin, or a Buddha, or something, out there in India; and Ralph parted with it to Mr. Maxwell, as a kind of pledge or security that the latter would do his part in the mad undertaking. The ring is valuable, I believe, and Ralph says he must have it back. It was all a madcap business transacted in a Dublin club; but no one took Mr. Maxwell seriously until he asked for the ring; and then Ralph couldn't refuse it. But father is gloomy over the matter. Ralph says it is only the depression of gout, which will wear away.

There, now, I think I have told you everything. Oh! I was near forgetting. 'Tis only a trifle; but you are so good as to be interested in every little thing that concerns me. The poor organist at the cathedral did grind out the Wedding March from *Lohengrin;* but he broke down suddenly. Something went wrong with the hydraulic engine, or something else; but we had gone! Otherwise, I — not I, but some of my dear friends — would say it was an evil omen. I hope I am above such things; but some people are so

superstitious. Anything more? No, except that I love you dearly, dearest Edith, and dream and dream and dream of the day which shall reunite us. Do you know, I sadly need a *friend;* and I have not one. With which sad confession, I remain, as ever,

Yours, etc.,

MABEL OUTRAM.

P. S. — Ralph tells me that he is some relative to a great Outram, who distinguished himself in India, far back in the eighteenth century, or seventeenth, I quite forget which. *N'importe!* Isn't Ralph, too, great, or shall be? M. O.

When the little woman to whom the above letter was addressed, received it on a dull December morning, as the old year closed sorrowfully, she uttered some ejaculations that were quite unintelligible to her Hindoo maid. And all day she went around sorrowful and mute, so that her husband asked her anxiously at dinner:

"Is't a mutiny at Delhi, or an approaching earthquake, Edith? I never saw you look so glum!"

To which she only vouchsafed the dumb answer of putting her finger on her lips, and waving a certain letter in the air.

Once or twice he heard her murmuring: "Porphyry vase! Cobra coiled at the bottom! Sanskrit!" But he was too wise to ask further questions.

CHAPTER XX

POOR REYNARD

MUCH as he struggled against it, Maxwell became every day, after Hamberton's visit, sunk in profound melancholy. They had brought with them that atmosphere of refinement and wealth to which he had been now for months a perfect stranger; and this had awakened reminiscences of the past life of gracious ease and pleasure, which was his natural environment. Nay; it must be confessed that, after this visit, Lisheen took on an aspect of sordid poverty which it had not worn before; and — shall it be said? — Debbie, his nurse, his handmaid, whom he had come to regard with a kind of brotherly affection, and whose rustic health and comeliness he had often wondered at, suddenly shrank into a mere country girl, rough, strong, healthy, but sadly wanting in the nameless graces that surround her city-bred sisters. The whole revolution in his feelings was horrible to his conscience and his honour; and he struggled manfully against it. But it would come back. That visit had shed a light on the floor of the humble cottage, in which the old, familiar aspects of things could never be seen again.

And then, as he brooded over this sudden change in his feelings, the conviction would force itself upon his judgment that his mission had failed. He had done nothing. These people were — where he had found them some

months ago. He was so far from having lifted up the entire population, that he had not even helped on a single family. All that he had dreamed of in his sunniest moments had been dissipated. He had gained but one thing — the grace of illumination, the deep, close insight into a condition of things that seemed to him desperate. Whatever he had read or heard of the sordid and humble condition of peasant life in Ireland paled into shadows before the reality; and "Good God!" he cried, "imagine some quarter of a million of people living under these conditions. The very stones should cry out."

In marked and violent contrast with his own failure was the reported success of this Englishman, Hamberton. He had made many cautious inquiries of Pierry and of the priest as to the success of Hamberton's work. Yes; there was no denying it. Hamberton had swept away a foul village of rotten cabins, and replaced it with a comfortable and picturesque little hamlet of neat, red-tiled cottages; Hamberton had burned some rotting coracles and placed a little fleet of safe and shapely vessels in the harbour. Hamberton had put up a little fishing-pier; and Hamberton had torn open the bosom of a hill that had sheltered its treasures with ignoble secrecy since the creation of things, and with the appliances of science had established an industry that was repaying him and yielding a decent livelihood to his workmen.

"What wages does he give?" asked Maxwell.

"Fifteen shillings to boys; twenty and twenty-five shillings to men," said Pierry, as if he were relating something legendary and fabulous.

Father Cosgrove confirmed the legend, adding that he

never allowed the men to work more than nine hours a day — seven to nine; ten to one P.M.; two to six P.M.

"And they have never struck?"

"No; they have murmured, but no more."

"We need the hand of the Saxon over us as yet," said Maxwell, in confession of his own impotence.

But the sense of failure galled him. How could he ever go back to Dublin, and face his own class again? The time was running on; and, so far, he could see no way out of the terrible difficulty wherein he had deliberately placed himself. If he could only see Hamberton, confess his identity and his failure, and seek for light and leading! But he had given his answer, curt and clear enough, and how now could he break with these people who had been so humane and kind? It was a horrible *impasse*, this to which his precipitancy had led him; and, apparently, there was no escape.

A few days before Christmas the long-expected letter came from a daughter in Philadelphia. There were many excuses for the delay — sickness, hospital expenses eating away whatever little reserve had accumulated, etc., but it contained a postal order for £5; and there was great jubilation at Lisheen.

"I'll take it in to the agent," said Owen McAuliffe, "and get a clare resate from him. And thin we can bring down the cattle. I hope it will be a long time before we can have to clare the manes agin!"

"Av you take my advice," said Pierry, "you'll buy a shuit of clothes for yerself, and a dress for Debbie, and let us have one dacent Christmas dinner; and pitch that ruffian to the divil."

"Betther have an aisy mind an' our night's rest," said Owen. "Sure I have not wan dacent shleep since our cattle wos removed."

So the old man took in the five pounds to Tralee, trudging the whole thirteen miles thither and back, and returning with a sad countenance.

"He wouldn't take thim," said he in explanation. "He demanded two pounds, twelve and sixpence more — costs, he said — which I hadn't to give him. I'm afeard he manes mischief."

"I'm dom'd glad he didn't," said Pierry. "Did you bring us anythin' from town for the holidays?"

"Not much," said the old man, dragging out of a frayed and broken bag a scraggy piece of raw beef and a bottle of whisky. "'Twas hard to brake Mary's bit o' money; but I thought ye'd be expectin' somethin'."

"The ruffian does mane mischief," said Pierry. "But we'll be ready for him; believe you me, we'll be ready for him."

Christmas Eve came around — that blessed season when men seem to forget for a while that life is a warfare, and to remember that momentous saying: "A new commandment I give you — that you love one another, as I have loved you." Alas! It fell cold and bleak, and darkened by shadows of coming ills, on the little household at Lisheen.

One incident touched Maxwell deeply, revealing as it did awful depths of poverty and hardship. Right over the fireplace there hung two pigs' heads, so dry, so hard, so blackened by eternal smoke, that for a long time he

had supposed them to be wooden ornaments or articles of an unknown use. That they could be used for human food never remotely entered his mind, until this momentous Christmas Eve, when it was suggested that, perhaps, they could make the sacrifice, and use one of these as a kind of condiment to the ragged beef which the old man had brought from Tralee. At first the idea was scouted, the old woman protesting that she would feel lonesome-like, if she missed it from its accustomed place; but probably it was Maxwell's presence that finally decided that the bacon should be used with the beef.

"Two kinds of mate," said the old man, jokingly. "Begor, we're gettin' on in the world."

And yet it was a lonesome Christmas — probably the most utterly miserable time Maxwell had yet spent.

St. Stephen's day dawned bright, crisp, and cheerful; and the two young men, Pierry and Maxwell, started out for a long bright walk up the mountain-side. It was about eleven o'clock, and they had mounted a declivity or two, when suddenly the music of a horn and the baying of fox-hounds broke on their ears. It startled them both into feelings of swift and eager joy; for Maxwell was a keen sportsman, and one of his many sorrows at Lisheen was to see the pheasant and the partridge whirring over his head whilst his fingers twitched for the weapon that was not there; and Pierry, like every farmer's son in Ireland, was prepared to walk twenty miles to a race or a meet. They both wheeled around, and saw, deep down in the level, a gay assemblage of pink and black coats, hats shining in the sunlight, and the dappled coats of the hounds. They swiftly descended and came out on the

road, and made their way down to the meet. The huntsman was consulting some farmers or labourers, who were pointing hither and thither as if to demonstrate the places where a fox was likely to be found. When the two young men mingled with the throng they just heard the name "Netterville" addressed by one of the gentlemen present to a horseman, who sat his horse without grace, and was otherwise distinguished by short stature, a furtive look, and a pair of bristling moustaches fiery red, and sharply cut at the ends.

In an instant, Pierce McAuliffe divined that this was the hated agent, who threatened ruin to their humble household, and while his passions flamed up, he swiftly decided that, no matter what the consequences might be, he would shame that fellow before the crowd.

"Here," said the huntsman, impatient at the delay, whilst the fierce dogs ran aimlessly between the horses' legs, "do you know which of the two covers, Lisheen or Ahacross, is likely to hold a fox to-day?"

He spoke to Pierry and Maxwell.

"I dunno," said Pierry, with a drawl; "but I can put ye on the track of as big and bould a fox as there is from here to Dingle this minit."

"Where? where?" was shouted, as the horsemen bunched together.

"There, jest behind ye," said Pierry, pointing to Netterville.

There was a titter; and to escape, Netterville, under pretence of exercising his animal, leaped a fence, which, roughly constructed of stones, gave way beneath the horse's hoofs; and cantered into a field, where the stubble

of last harvest still lay. In an instant Pierce McAuliffe was after him.

"Get out, get out, d—— you," the boy cried, "get out of an honest man's lands, you thundering rogue."

The horseman wheeled round at the challenge and confronted the young man, who was now in a dreadful fury.

"How dare you, you, sir, speak to a gentleman in that manner? I'd cut your hide well for you."

"Would you?" said Pierry, coming over. "You daren't lay a wet finger on me, you d——d coward, and you know it. Come, out o' this! None of your exterminators and evicthors will hunt over my lands to-day."

The whole group had now gathered at the fence to watch the singular episode. And Netterville, pale with rage and shame, gnawed his moustache, and made his horse caracole around.

"Come, come," said Pierry; "no nonsense. Out of this field, or, by G ——, I'll make you."

There were now cries of anger from the whole hunt, and many queries:

"Who's this fellow? Who's his landlord? We must make an example of him," etc., etc.

And one said it was the Maxwell estate — which made Bob Maxwell shudder; and others said it was the Bernard property; and others that Netterville knew best, and would take a subtle revenge. He was still pulling his horse round and round, disliking to be conquered, and yet conscious that he was breaking the law, when Pierry, stung to madness by the remarks of the genteel crowd, struck the animal smartly on the haunches, and leaped aside just as the riding whip of Netterville swished in the

air over his head. Again Pierry struck, and again Netterville strove to lash him with his whip; but the boy was too agile, and lightly leaped back. At this juncture Maxwell, having shouted to the hunstman: "Call off the hounds if you don't want bloodshed!" leaped lightly over the fence, and approaching Netterville said, with the accent and manner of one gentleman addressing another:

"You must be aware, Mr. Netterville, that this young man has a strict legal right to stop hunting over his fields, and that you are putting yourself in the power of the law by assaulting him. Come, let me lead your horse!"

"Who the devil—?" Netterville was saying, when Maxwell quietly took his horse by the head, and, as the bridle swung loose in the rider's hands, cantered the animal gently across the stubble and led him through the gap on to the road. Then, looking up, he saw Hugh Hamberton and Miss Moulton watching with interest the whole proceeding. The former, his face set sternly and his lips tightly closed, was looking vacantly across the field. He was evidently studying this strange object-lesson in Irish life, and apparently his sympathies were with the boy who had merely asserted his legal rights. Claire Moulton, looking very trim and perfect in her riding habit, was slightly flushed, and that strange gleam came into her eyes as in every moment of excitement. Maxwell was turning away, when she nodded in a friendly manner towards him; and Hamberton, waking up, said gravely:

"You did that well, my young friend, very well indeed. Come, Claire!"

They galloped after the hounds; and then, for the first

time, was Maxwell aware how shabbily he was dressed and how plebeian a picture he must have presented to these new-found friends, in whom he had begun to feel a strange interest. He looked down at his mud-soiled boots, his blue trousers stained with earth and badly frayed at the extremities, his overcoat gray and wrinkled and greasy, his brown hat slightly indented and badly discoloured, and he grew red with shame.

"I'd have killed him if you hadn't interfered," said a voice. It was Pierry's; and his white face and manner made it clear that he meant it. "An' it was a chanst that will never come again. They couldn't hang me, for it was he broke the law."

The young men returned home, whilst the hunt moved away across the country towards Ahacross; and the short, bright winter day was darkening slowly towards evening, when again the deep baying of hounds, and the sound of the horn, drew them forth from the fireside.

This time, following the sounds, they went up towards the hills, Pierry armed with a thick bludgeon, and as determined as in the morning to allow not one of that hated band to cross a fence of his fields. When they had reached the heights, they saw the huntsmen labouring heavily across some fields beneath them, and looking further up they saw the hounds slowly and laboriously toiling up the fields, their tongues lolling out sideways and their dappled skins white and panting with exhaustion. A little in advance, and making his way apparently towards a farmer's cottage just outside the bounds of Lisheen, was poor Reynard, now making one last desperate struggle for life. He had given them a glorious run for many miles

across the country from the cover at Ahacross; and now, as he stumbled wearily across the ploughed field, he could not be distinguished, except by practised eyes, from the brown earth, so discoloured was he with dirt and so slow and heavy his movements. The hounds were leaping the fences into this field, as he approached the farm-yard; and they were now silent from fatigue, and the certainty that they had reached their quarry. One or two huntsmen, and one lady, were leading, when suddenly the fox disappeared, as if the ground had swallowed him; and the hounds, rushing madly here and there, set up short yelps of disappointment.

There was a large crowd of country people assembled to watch the hunt; and they were as deeply interested in the sudden and unexpected termination of the day's sport as the horsemen who had ridden across country, and who now came up, hot, querulous, and angry. No one could tell what had become of Reynard, until one old hound, whose experience atoned for his loss of scent, tracked the animal down to where a narrow channel, on the level of the field, seemed to lead through the ground across the road. It was so narrow and so blocked with brambles, that the hound could only put his nose into the aperture, whence he immediately withdrew with a long deep howl of disappointment. In a short time, the whole hunt had assembled, horses and men panting and foam-flecked with the fierce exertion; but after a pause of a quarter of an hour or so, the huntsman decided that Reynard had escaped, and he drew off his hounds, and faced homewards. With the terrible instinct for destruction which still lingers in human hearts, the hunt, ladies and gentlemen

alike, decided that it would be worth while to wait and unearth the fox; and they asked a few peasant lads present if there were no means of driving Reynard from his retreat. Maxwell, who with Pierry was standing by, could not help saying, as he forgot for the moment his assumed character:

"Let the brute alone! He has given you a good day's sport, and will give another. Don't you see the hounds are gone!"

There were some profane answers to this burst of indignation, some supercilious queries: "Who is this fellow?" etc., etc., which were interrupted when a young peasant lad put in a fox terrier in the channel, and the hounds and huntsman were whistled after to return. In a few minutes the poor hunted brute emerged from the channel at the other side, and wearily crossed a potato patch near the farmer's outhouses. There was a shout of triumph from the horsemen, the huntsman rode merrily up, the hounds gave tongue once more, and the hunted animal ran wearily backward and forward on a ditch that bounded the farmer's haggart. When the hounds plunged down into the potato garden the fox, with one last effort for life, leaped up and struggled wildly to get a foothold on the thatch of the barn. He succeeded, and for the next few minutes he ran across the ridge of the barn, whilst the hounds came beneath, yelping at their victim and tossing their tails wildly. The whole hunt stood still, watching the end. Maxwell was furious. It was cold-blooded cruelty, without an atom of sport. He told the huntsman so; he told the horsemen so; he told the ladies so. They looked on and laughed After

about ten minutes' vain endeavour to tire out or elude his foes, it was clear the fox's strength was failing. There was nothing for it but to wait. Then one fierce dog leaped up and pursued the exhausted animal. Without a cry, or moan, the poor brute rolled down the thatch, and fell into the jaws of twenty hounds. In a few seconds he was torn limb from limb, and nothing remained but a few scraps of skin and bone. The hunstman deftly saved the brush, and cantering over to where Claire Moulton was holding in her horse, he gallantly offered it to her. But she put it aside with a gesture of disgust; and Maxwell, again forgetting himself, could not help saying:

"Quite right, Miss Moulton! It was the most brutal and unsportsmanlike act I ever saw!"

Which remark again excited the curiosity of the crowd, who could not reconcile Maxwell's manner with his dress and company. And many were the conjectures that were made, as the hunt broke up and the horsemen filed slowly homewards in the deepening twilight. And Pierry too was lost in thought as he trudged slowly down the hill to Lisheen.

"Perhaps, after all," he whispered to himself, "Debbie may be right. No wan but wan of theirsel's would spake up to thim that way. But what, then, can he be doin' here?"

CHAPTER XXI

AT BRANDON HALL

LIKE many another poor mortal, Ned Galwey, trusting too much to his little learning, and refusing to be taught by experience, fell and fell sadly. The conviction forced itself on his imagination until it became a monomania, that gold was here, here in their own townland, where they were born and reared, and where now this black stranger coolly comes in and, by aid of superior knowledge, which was uncanny and criminal, was piling up an enormous fortune secretly and covertly from the world. The thought was maddening. Ned had read all about Nevada and the mines of Kimberley, and the rivers rolling down their golden sand in far India. And here, clearly and unmistakably, was this prospector, luckily for himself, digging and mining and pocketing the precious metal that had lain so long within a few feet of their own labours.

The nights were cold; Ned Galwey heeded it not, but established a kind of detective system of his own, by which, sooner or later, he sought to catch Hamberton, as the wise men of old caught the Leprechaun and compelled him to surrender his ill-gotten wealth. Night after night he wandered around the lonely hills that frowned down on the marble quarries, expecting to see the glint of the lantern that would mark the Englishman at work; but he saw nothing, except, now and again, a hare that he might

start from her form, or some wild thing creeping in the darkness from covert to covert. The good wife came to the conclusion that Ned's head was "turned"; and she communicated her fears to others; until at length the report reached Hamberton of Ned's nocturnal vigils, and he swore he would teach the fellow a lesson, and then dismiss him back to his farm and his fishing.

In one of the limestone caves in his quarries he had a tall figure dressed completely in white, the head covered except to reveal a grinning skull. He placed a lantern to hang as it were from the hands of the dead, and secreted two confidential men in the cave on a certain very dark night in January. Then, when his whole household were stilled in sleep, he came out at midnight, and slowly and cautiously entered the rough path to his quarries. As he went along, he threw the powerful light of an acetylene lamp before him; and he often paused and looked down, and picked up worthless pebbles and threw them away. He was quite conscious that his every movement was watched from above, and he strove by every gesture and pause to increase Ned Galwey's suspicions. At last he put out the light and entered the cave, and instantly Ned descended and followed him.

"I have him at lasht," said Ned. "An' he's the divil if he escapes me now. Here he has his gold heaped up in bags or boxes, I suppose. I wondher will I be able for him!"

Ned's idea was to come behind Hamberton, when the latter was counting his treasures, and seize him and them, using only the violence that might be necessary to carry out his project. He calculated that Hamberton might not

know him in the darkness; or that, if he were detected, it would be Hamberton's interest, as well as his own, to keep the matter secret. For he had some dim idea that Hamberton's supposed mining was not strictly legal; and that the government or the landlord had claims on mines and minerals.

He stumbled over broken limestone and marble, as he descended from his post of observation; and, once or twice, when he caused some larger boulder to tumble down the declivity, with a noise as he imagined like thunder, his guilty conscience made him pause in terror. As he proceeded further, his terror became greater, until the bark of a sleepless dog, or even the wash of the sea, made him tremble. He would have turned back, but that the demon of cupidity was too strong within him, and the glint of the imaginary gold blinded his eyes to guilt and danger.

At length, after many pauses, he reached the opening of the cave. There was the dim reflection of some light cast from behind a mighty shelf of rock that screened the entrance of the cavern, and Ned thought: "He's now at his work, the divil; and won't he be surprised?"

Cautiously he crept forward, and then, after a moment's pause, he flew swiftly around the boulder, and came face to face, not with Hamberton, but with the awful sheeted, silent figure, with the skull grinning from beneath the white hood. A lantern hung down before the ghost and lit the walls of the cave.

For an instant Ned Galwey was paralyzed with terror, and could only stare. There was a sudden bending forward of the awful figure, and then the unhappy fellow,

with an awful shriek, turned to flee. As he did the figure fell on him and threw him to the earth. The lantern was extinguished, and in the darkness and dread and cold terror, as of death, his consciousness staggered and fled.

In the gray dawn of the morning, when the men assembled for work in the quarries, they thought they heard stifled moans proceeding from a certain cave, where sometimes they left their picks and hammers after the day's work. After some hesitation, for the Irish peasant is rather fearful of "finding somethin'" that would implicate him with the law, they entered the cave and saw but a white sheet, from beneath which the moans came, sad and fitful enough, a broken lantern, and a skull. They raised the sheet and discovered the prostrate figure of Ned Galwey, more dead than alive. To every query, there was but one feeble answer:

"Oh! the ghosht! the ghosht!"

"What the divil brought you here, Ned, man alive?"

"Oh! the ghosht! the ghosht!"

"How long are you here?"

"Oh! the ghosht! the ghosht!"

"Rouse up, man alive, and tell us what happened."

"Oh! the ghosht! the ghosht!"

"Thunder and turf, man! What ghosht? What did you see?"

"Oh! the ghosht! the ghosht!"

"This bangs Banagher. This must be the banshee that we hard last night late. But what brought Ned Galwey here in the middle of the night?"

"Oh! the ghosht! the ghosht!"

They took him home and told his wife the circumstances.

Even to her queries he had but one answer: "The ghosht! the ghosht!" And for many years after, whenever Ned was coming home from a fair or market, and was "unco fu'," it was a usual sight to behold him swaying to and fro within the prison of his crate and cart, and to hear him cry with outstretched hands: "Oh! the ghosht! the ghosht!" At last he became known all around the countryside as "The Haunted Man."

Hamberton, however, was not disposed to let him off so easily. He had a good deal of contempt for such a character; and he needed an example to prove that the popular fancy about hidden treasure was ill-founded, and also to show the discontented moiety of his labourers that he was not a man to be trifled with.

When time and thought brought back something like reason to Ned Galwey, Hamberton calmly but firmly demanded an authentic account of the event that was now the talk of two parishes. The one point that he desired particularly to clear up was, what brought Ned to the cave that winter night. He knew right well what it was; but he demanded the admission from Ned's own lips. This was no easy task. Ned had several theories about his presence in the cave, and these varied as their probabilities. He said he was bewitched; that he was a somnambulist; that he had dreamt three times running that there was a "crock of goold" hidden in the cave, and that it was whilst dreaming he sought it. Finally, he declared that it was "thim moonlighters, who wor agin the government an' every dacent, hard-working man, and who would think no more of shooting an Englishman than of shooting a rabbit, who took him by force out of his warm bed by

night, and thranshported him to the cave, where they held their nocturnal and rebellious meetings."

Hamberton took each story as it came from Ned's lips, and told it to the men; and each new invention was a source of intense amusement day by day; whilst Hamberton saw that every additional falsehood was wearing softly away every trace of discontent and every lingering idea that he was secretly amassing wealth. Then, one day, he determined to call them together and talk to them of their infidelity and perfidy. But he abandoned the idea under the influence of some cynical humour.

"'Tis all the same," he argued, "and will be so to the end of time. All men are liars. I must tolerate them until I can leave them forever."

This was the idea — not passion, nor fear, nor monomania — but the calm, well-formed idea that was haunting the mind of this singular man. The idea of getting out of life, when he had accomplished certain things, as softly and as voluptuously as possible. The old Roman mode of life, sybaritic, cynical, philosophical, appealed strongly to him. And the Roman method of leaving life appealed to him still more strongly. He had no idea of drifting on to old age, a prey to every wretched infirmity, until he became an object of contempt even to those few who loved him. He had seen old age and shuddered at it — its imbecility, its multiform diseases, its impotence; and he determined that when certain things had been done he would leave of his own free will this most disastrous world. Once or twice he had hinted this to Father Cosgrove in their occasional conferences on the immortality of the soul and the future life. Then, he had broadly stated

his intention to the horrified priest to leave this wretched life as soon as he had placed Claire Moulton under the protection of some man, in whose honour he could confide. And he added, in mitigation of the horror he had raised in the mind of the simple priest:

"You see it is a far-off event, Father. I think the condition is hardly realizable at all; or, at least, only so after the lapse of many years. But when you meet that Sir Galahad, you will tell me, will you not?"

"You must allow Miss Moulton some choice," the priest answered. "From the little I know of them, young ladies' fancies cannot be forced, cannot be forced."

"Quite so. Quite so. I shall allow Claire the most absolute freedom. But this puts my design further back. Because, you know, like all girls, she is sure to marry a knave or a fool."

"I'm not so sure of that," said the priest. "But I pray it may be so; or that God will change your heart. And he will; he will. I am but a poor prophet; but I foresee the day when Miss Moulton will be the happy mistress of Brandon Hall, and you her honoured and respected friend and father."

"Oh, man of mighty faith, how little dost thou know! How little dost thou know!" said Hamberton.

CHAPTER XXII

A TERRIBLE DISCOVERY

THE discovery that was now to throw dread and consternation, at least amongst some of the family at Lisheen, was made by Pierry, and communicated with great caution to Debbie alone. Maxwell's action and demeanour in the field before the hunt began, and afterwards at Reynard's death, gave, as we have seen, some food for reflection to Pierry McAuliffe. No peasant, no matter how brave and independent, would act as Maxwell had done; and surely no deserter, hiding from the police, would tempt Providence in that way. Pierry, loth enough to act the spy, was yet so disquieted about their visitor, that he determined to set a watch on his movements; and, although these were manifest and unconcealed, he thought he should catch Maxwell in some moment when he was off his guard, and in which he might reveal something that would betray his identity.

Strange to say, the thought of the agent, Netterville, of his anger at the insult offered him by Pierry before the entire hunt, and of the possible revenge he might take, did not occupy the mind of the young peasant these winter days so much as the question: Who was their unknown guest, whence had he come, and what was his object in selecting Lisheen, above all other places, for a retreat?

He questioned his father closely about the chance of

their having rich relatives in England or America, some far-out cousins, who might, after the lapse of many years, be anxious to resume the rights of family relations, and perhaps bring back some little resources to help their meagre means. The good father shook his head. There were, of course, relatives in America; but all were doing for themselves, and not likely to be troubled with home emergencies. There were none, so far as he knew, in England. He bade Pierry abandon all hope of succour from abroad. He thought that this was Pierry's idea. The latter then cast about for some other solution of the problem, but in vain. He consulted Debbie more than once. She persisted in maintaining that Maxwell was a gentleman; and she instanced his demeanour towards Miss Moulton when they had visited Lisheen. She spoke rather scornfully of "that thing," as she called Miss Moulton, and in great laudation of Maxwell's attitude towards people who should have minded their own business.

Clearly, then, Maxwell was a gentleman — but in disguise, and hiding away in this remote place for some obscure and suspicious cause. He cast up every possible cause in his mind — domestic trouble, reduced means, gambling, even Debbie's attractions; but rejected them all. The revelation then burst unexpectedly upon him.

Every soft moonlight night in the early spring he noticed that Maxwell, after supper, used to throw on a heavy frieze coat, and, under pretence of having a quiet smoke, was in the habit of going to a lonely plantation or screen of firs higher up on the hill, but not very far from the cottage. One night, when a heavy fog rose up from the

valleys beneath and almost hid everything, Pierry, under its friendly cover, followed Maxwell up along the hill, and hid in ambush under a wet and dripping hawthorn hedge, on which a few withered leaves and a few red berries were still lingering. The plantation, composed of heavy timber with light young fir-trees springing up between, looked ghostly enough in the pale moonlight, that was now struggling with the heavy fog; and through a path cut between the tender young saplings, on which the beads of vapour were glistening, Maxwell was walking to and fro, apparently buried in deep thought. Suddenly, and with a kind of stifled cry, he stopped; and, turning around, he appeared to be engaged in angry altercation with some unseen person. His voice at first was pleading and pitiful, then it rose shrill and piercing, as if arguing against the suggestion of some terrible deed. Then it seemed to die away, as if remonstrance were unavailing, and Pierry heard him mutter: "When we have marked with blood these sleepy two," as Maxwell turned away into the recesses of the plantation again.

The boy was badly frightened; but he had nerve enough to wait and see what further developments would take place.

After a pause Maxwell emerged from the shadow of the firs, and stood in the open moonlit space again.

Suddenly he turned, as if taken red-handed in his guilt, and shouted:

"Who's there? What, ho!"

Pierry, now believing that he was discovered by this madman or murderer, was about to run, when Maxwell, after a pause, cried:

"What hands are here? ha! they pluck out my eyes."

And then, as he rubbed his hands violently together, Pierry heard him ask if all the waters in the ocean could wash the filthy blood from his hands.

He needed no more; but crept along the hawthorn hedge and, once again wrapped in the fog, sped down with throbbing heart and bursting eyes towards home. But as it would never do to reveal prematurely all things before they were ripe, and as Pierry, consummate actor as he was, was now determined to see other and more tangible proofs of this man's guilt, he went into the cowhouse, and remained there until he saw Maxwell, half an hour later, lift the latch of the cottage door and go in. Then Pierry, with a half-lighted pipe in his hand, also entered, and sat down as calm as he could by the smouldering fire.

"A cowld night outside?" said the old man.

"'Tis cold," said Maxwell, so calmly that Pierry was shocked by the contrast of the man's demeanour with what he had witnessed an hour ago. "There is a thick fog and a heavy dew is falling."

"I fear the ground is too wet to turn up a-yet?" said the old man, interrogatively.

"Yes," said Maxwell. "It would be heavy under the plough just now."

"I suppose we musht wait, though the spring is running on," said the old man.

And Maxwell pursued the conversation as calmly as if nothing was on his mind more terrible than the fencing of a ditch or the planting of a ridge of potatoes.

"He's the divil's own play-acthor intirely," Pierry thought, as he beckoned Debbie to follow him.

Not till they had gone around the house, and were safely ensconced in the cow-byre did Pierry open his mind to the wondering sister.

"I've found out all," he whispered at first.

"All what?" said Debbie.

"All about the *bouchal* inside," said Pierry.

Then Debbie's curiosity, and more than curiosity, was aroused.

"No wondher he was hidin'," said Pierry. "If I had what he has on my mind I'd drownd meself in the say."

"Wha — what is it?" said Debbie, now thoroughly terrified, as she looked out into the square of moonlight before the door.

"You'd never guess," said Pierry.

"No; what in the Name of God is it?" said Debbie. "Is it anything very bad intirely?"

"Couldn't be worse," said Pierry. "He has blood on his sowl, as sure as we're talkin' here to-night. He has done away wid somebody."

"Great God in Heaven to-night!" almost shrieked the girl, "what did we do to punish us in this way? To think of having a murderer in the house, an' undher our roof! But are you sure, Pierry?" she asked, as the gleam of an old affection shone up under such a dark cloud of gloom. "How do you know? How did you find it out?"

"Aisy enough," said Pierry. "I had it from his own lips; an' if you can hould yer tongue for wan twenty-four hours, you can hear it, too, or I'm mistaken." Then he told her all.

They then decided to hold a deep, unbroken silence

about the matter, until Debbie could verify her brother's suspicions. And then they would consult further on the matter.

The next night was equally favourable for observation; and when Maxwell, again donning the heavy frieze coat, strolled out into the moonlight, Pierry soon followed. But he immediately returned, and said aloud:

"I'm thinkin', Debbie, that some wan is paying a polite visit to your fowl. At laste, they're makin' the h—— of a row outside."

"Wisha, bad luck to that fox!" said Debbie, hustling around and assuming a heavy shawl. "There's the second visit this year; and not a pinny compinsation from thim huntsmin."

Brother and sister separated in the yard; and made their way, by different routes, towards the plantation, the theatre of Maxwell's appalling confessions. But they met and crouched beneath the hawthorn where Pierry was ambushed the night before. The night was cold and the grass was wet; but they heeded not these things under the spell of the night's adventures.

"Now, Debbie," whispered Pierry, "for your sowl's sake, don't let a screech out o' you, nor wan worrd, no matther what you see, or you'll spile all."

"I'll try," said Debbie with chattering teeth and shivering all over, rather from fright than cold.

Again they had not long to wait. For again Maxwell, his figure looming up larger in the mist, emerged from the plantation where the trees were thickest, and stood in the glade, where the young saplings could not conceal him. After pausing some time, and making some wild

gesticulations, he struck his forehead violently with his right hand and strode back into the shadows.

"Did you see that?" whispered Pierry.

"I did," chattered Debbie. "God help us! he has something weighty on his sowl."

"Weighty enough," answered Pierry. "Wondher we never shuspected anything. Whisht! here he comes again!"

Again, with slow and solemn tread, Maxwell strode out into the moonlight; and after a pause, and looking around solemnly at the heavens, he suddenly gave a violent start, as if he had seen an apparition, and shouted at it to depart: "Avaunt! and quit my sight! Thou canst not say I did it; never shake thy gory locks at me!"

These were the appalling cries that came to the frightened watchers.

"He sees something," whispered Debbie, half dead with terror. "Can you see anything, Pierry?"

"I do," said Pierry. "There's somethin' white between the trees."

"Is it a man or a woman?" said Debbie.

"'Tis nayther. 'Tis a sperrit," whispered Pierry. "'Tis the thing he kilt."

"God save us!" said Debbie, making the sign of the cross. "Could we get home without his seein' us?"

"No, no," said Pierry. "Listen! he's at it agin!"

Maxwell was still apparently arguing with the ghost, when suddenly the latter must have disappeared; for he turned around, and pulled up his coat-collar and muttered:

"Why, so; being gone, I am a man again."

And muttering: "I will have blood; they say, blood will have blood," he went back into the shades again.

"Come home, in God's Name!" said Debbie to her brother.

"No, no," said Pierry. "We must see it out now. We won't get a chance agin!"

"But maybe he's gone home," said Debbie.

"No," said Pierry. "You'll see him lightin' his pipe first."

"He's the cool divil out an' out," said Debbie. "To think of shmokin' after what he's seen! But I wondher who was it? Was it a man or a 'uman?"

"Wait, and maybe he'll let on!" said Pierry.

This time the interval was longer; but at last Maxwell came out into the glade again. After a few minutes, he began an imaginary dialogue with some person or persons, but in a low, determined tone. Then he walked backwards and forwards as if waiting. Again he addressed his victim, who appeared to be pleading with him for mercy. He answered sharply and walked to and fro again. The only words they could catch were:

"Well, quick, be brief; I would not kill thy soul."

The dialogue now became more impassioned, Maxwell uttering quick, jerky expressions, as of one impatient and not going to be trifled with. At last he stopped short, and, stooping down, made as if he would kneel on his victim's breast to suffocate or destroy him. He was apparently interrupted in his murderous effort, for he stood up suddenly, and, looking around, shouted:

"What noise is that? Who's there?"

"He's found us out," said Debbie. "What'll we do?"

"No," said Pierry. "'Tis the divil's conscience that's troubling him. Whisht!"

But they heard no more. For Maxwell, after one long, lingering look at the dead body, passed into the shrubbery again.

In a few seconds he came back, and stood over the dead body, his hands clasped and hanging down before him. Then he broke out into an awful lamentation, swinging his hands wildly, like women that are keening over a corpse; and, in a voice broken by his tears and moans, they could hear him saying:

"Cold, cold, my girl! Whip me, ye devils! Blow me about in winds! Roast me in sulphur! Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire! Oh! dead, dead, dead! Oh! Oh!! oh!!!"

These last words he almost screamed, his arms held wildly over his head; and his whole frame contorted in agony. The lonely hour, the otherwise silent scene, the ghostly moonlight, the heavy drapery of mist and fog, and this man, alone with his terrible remorse, made a picture of horror and desolation that would have paralyzed any soul with dread. The girl nearly fainted, while her tears fell fast; and it needed every effort of her brother to keep her from shrieking out with the horror that confronted her. At last Maxwell went away; and Debbie was free to speak amid her tears.

"Oh, Mother of Heaven to-night!" she cried, whilst her brother held her in his strong arms, "what are we to do, at all, at all? To think of our having a murderer in our house for over six months, an' we thratin' him like a gintleman. Sure I knew there was somethin' quare about

him all along; but we couldn't sind him away. An' it was a girl! Sure I ought to know it. What's that he said: 'Cowld, cowld, me girl!' Oh! the ruffian! To desthroy some poor, innicent crachure, that never did nobody harrum —"

"Well, he seems sorry enough for what he done!" said Pierry. "Did ye hear him callin' on all the divils in hell to blow and blasht him? An' sure, bad as he is, it made me a'most cry to hear him say: 'Oh! oh! oh!' in the ind!"

"What good is all that, if he done the deed?" said Debbie, who was jealous that another had preceded her in Maxwell's affections. "Will all that moanin' and groanin' bring the poor thing back to life? Well, I suppose he'll have to swing high for it now. Sure, he can't escape much longer!"

"But what in God's Holy Name are we to do?" she continued. "Sure, we can't give him up to the pelice. We'd be called thraitors and informers forever!"

"We'll lave it alone till to-morrow, however," said Pierry, "and maybe I'll run over and tell the priesht!"

"The very thing," said Debbie, trying to dry her eyes. "But how am I to meet him again, or set at table with him, or make his bed?"

"Well, do your besht," said Perry. "It will never do to let on that we know anythin'. Why, he might murdher us all in our beds!"

"May God and his Blessed Mother save us!" said Debbie. "What a pickle we got ourselves into by too much good nature. 'Twill be a lesson to us, I warrant you."

They passed down the hillside together, and then sepa-

rated in the yard, Pierry going into the cabin first. After a long time Debbie entered; but kept turning her face away from the place where Maxwell was calmly smoking and chatting with the old people.

"Come over and take a hate of the fire," said her mother; and when Debbie demurred, the mother looked at her keenly and saw she had been crying.

"Why, surely, 'tisn't cryin' about a couple of chickens you are?" she said.

"'Tis enough to make any girl mad," interposed Pierry, "to see wan fine fowl afther another desthroyed by that rogue of a fox."

"Yerra, no matther," said the mother, "there's as good to be got where thim kem from."

This commenced a pretty little debate, after Maxwell had inquired what were the rules regulating compensation to farmers and labourers for the destruction of poultry by the foxes kept for the gentry's amusement. He was very indignant at the revelations — the refusal in nine cases out of ten to repay anything, the incredulity of the gentleman who was Grand Almoner, the proofs that were required of the peasantry, the pittance that was reluctantly given. He expressed himself freely about the iniquitous custom. It was another sidelight on Irish history. But no matter how indignant and sympathetic he was, especially with Debbie, she kept her face averted from him. She only heard:

"Cold, cold, my girl! Oh, dead, dead, dead! Oh! oh!! oh!!!"

CHAPTER XXIII

HOMELESS

At dawn next morning the whole household was startled from slumber by the sudden appearance of police in the yard. They had heard the rumbling of cars in a kind of half dream, and the swift orders of officers; but the half-dream became a dread reality when, on looking out through the half pane which served as a window, they saw the rough frieze coats and the glazed caps of the officers of the law. Debbie was the first to realize the situation; and Maxwell, in his settle bed, awoke from heavy slumber to see her half-dressed form in the kitchen, and hear her shout to Pierry in the loft:

"Pierry, Pierry, get up; get up! the place is full of police!"

And in an instant there was a furious knocking at the door and the stern order:

"Open in the Queen's name!"

The girl was so full of her adventure the night before, she at once associated the presence of the police with the crime of Maxwell; and it was with a look of some pity and remorse she said to the latter:

"The police are lookin' for some wan!"

She was swiftly undeceived when, on opening the kitchen door, two brutal fellows, clearly bailiffs, rushed in and began at once to take possession of the place.

Utterly heedless of protestations and appeals, they commenced flinging out into the yard everything they could lay hands on, utterly regardless as to whether it was broken or not. Chairs, tables, the settle, the ware, tins, dishes, pictures, the wheel-bellows at the fire, the dried meat over the fireplace, the irons that held the heavy pots — all were flung out, whilst Pierry and Maxwell and Debbie looked on as if paralyzed. Then the latter rushed into the room where her parents were. The bailiffs were following, when Pierry rushed forward and planted himself before them:

"My father and mother aren't up yet," he said. "Give them time to dress theirselves."

But with an oath the fellows tried to get past. Pierry pushed them back, and cried out to his sister.

She instantly came forward and placed a heavy pike in her brother's hands. Thus armed, he beat the bailiffs back into the kitchen, and held the pike at rest to guard his father's privacy. The fellows shouted for help; the police rushed in, made some feint to throw the boy off his guard, and in an instant had him and his sister handcuffed and led out, but not before one of the policemen was seriously stabbed in the thigh. As Debbie passed out she threw a look of withering scorn at Maxwell, and said:

"I know what you are; but I didn't know you wor a coward. But your time is near."

He flushed up and said nothing, but looked like one paralyzed. Then he was rudely hustled out of the room into the yard, where brother and sister were guarded by the police. In a few moments the old couple, sorrowful

but resigned, were driven out from their home, and the work of demolition proceeded. It took the bailiffs many hours to accomplish; for they were now in no hurry, but went on calmly with their dreadful work; and a huge collie dog, who took a family revenge by biting one of the bailiffs severely, had to be evicted and evicted again and again. Then the barns had to be visited, the turkeys, geese, and hens ejected; and the whole round of the farm examined, lest any living thing should be left on the place.

It was near three o'clock, and the orders were given to the officers to close in, when Hamberton and Miss Moulton rode in from the main road, through a dense mass of spectators, and into the yard. They had come by accident on the terrible scene. They had been out for an afternoon ride, when their attention was attracted by the presence of the vast, black crowd that filled the fields and lined the ditches at Lisheen. They were respectfully saluted by the police; and Hamberton entered into a close conversation with the District Inspector, whilst Claire Moulton rode over and inquired solicitously of Debbie how the whole unfortunate affair could have arisen. She was dreadfully shocked at seeing the steel handcuffs on the poor girl, and she said with some feeling to the officers:

"Surely these manacles are not necessary?"

The officer said nothing, but pointed across the yard where, in a butt, reclining on coarse straw, the wounded policeman lay. But Debbie, tortured by the revelations of last night, furious at their eviction and the perfidy of Maxwell, and tired after the long day's trial, hung down her head and was sullenly silent. She wanted no sym-

pathy from that quarter. Claire Moulton turned her horse's head aside; and Debbie looking up saw Mr. Hamberton arguing with the sheriff, and apparently proposing a settlement that would allow them to retake possession of their home. The latter apparently was on the point of yielding, for Debbie could hear the police discussing the whole question, and just then Hamberton had taken out a notebook and was rapidly writing in it, when Maxwell was seen to go over and remonstrate with him. The result was that Hamberton replaced the notebook in his pocket and shook his head, as if the matter were impracticable.

Debbie had witnessed the whole thing with blazing eyes, and she muttered between her teeth:

"Thraitor and murdherer! But you'll swing for this a-yet!"

The bailiffs, having walked the farm, and flung outside the boundaries every living thing, had come back into the yard; and, after some deliberation, they proceeded to demolish the dwelling house. It was at this crisis the old people, who had hitherto looked on in calm resignation at their fate, raised a wild cry of lamentation. It looked as if the final hope had been cut from beneath their feet; for so long as the dwelling was there, there was a chance of resuming possession. Now, the decree seemed to be irrevocable that the family should not enter on their land again. The dense crowd outside began to show symptoms of excitement, when the wild cries of the old people reached them; and a stray stone was dropped on the thatch where the bailiffs were at the work of destruction. The night-shades, too, were falling, and the officer looked

anxious. He had a long journey before him; and how could he conjecture what might happen under the cover of night, and passing through a hostile country? He looked anxiously at his watch; and again Hamberton approached the sheriff, apparently to remonstrate with him on the altogether unnecessary demolition of the little home. He appeared to be prevailing, and the sheriff had put up his hand to stop the dismantling of the roof, when again Maxwell interfered, and said something that apparently induced the officer to decide otherwise. It was such gross, uncalled-for treachery that even the patient old man said aloud:

"Dom your blood, you scoundrel! Isn't this a nice return for takin' you aff the road and makin' a dacent man av you?"

But the old woman interfered:

"Lave him to God, Owen! Lave him to God! Shure whin we mint well, 'twill be all the same bye-'m-bye!"

And Pierry said, and he threw his voice out from the midst of the *posse* of police that surrounded him:

"Yes; lave the ruffian to God, and the hangman's rope, that's swinging for him this many a day!"

Maxwell flushed up as he saw public attention thus drawn toward him, and then he grew suddenly pale, as he saw Hamberton's and Miss Moulton's eyes bent on him in surprise. But there was no longer time for sentiment. The night was falling; the bare rafters of the little home at Lisheen were now letting in the fading light on wreck and ruin; the window had been long since smashed; the door hung on its hinges. The evil work was done. The Inspector looked again at his watch, shook hands

with Hamberton, raised his hand in salute to Miss Moulton, pulled up his scabbard, and ordered his men to fall in.

Maxwell, looking wistfully at the two prisoners, seemed undecided what to do. Then, under a sudden impulse, he strode over to where Debbie, who had been sitting on a cart surrounded by police, was standing up to accompany her captors to gaol. She looked him straight between the eyes in her fearless way; and his face fell before her gaze. But he had to say something.

"Don't judge me too hard, now," he pleaded. "I cannot explain. Some day you will understand and forgive."

The old, smothered affection rose up in the girl's heart, as she saw his worn and woe-begone face. There was nothing of the self-assurance of a traitor there. Only a pitiful, pleading look for mercy and compassion. But the remembrance of last night came up, and steeled her to every kinder feeling.

"There's One that will judge you and condemn you — you know for what!"

"I don't know what you mean," he said. "I tell you, as God is my Judge, that I have done no wrong to your family or yourself. You will understand this soon; and all will be clear."

"I only understand," she said, "that wan day, not so long ago, I called you back when you were facin' the world. May the Lord forgive me for it! Now, go your own ways, and may the divil, your father, guide you."

And jerking her shawl over her head with her shoulders, as the policeman helped her, she strode forward to join her brother. The old people came forward to say good-bye.

"God save you, and God keep you, alanna!" said the weeping mother. "Sure, never mother reared a betther son nor daughter than ye. God save you and keep you; and come back soon! Sure, God is above us all!"

And she kissed the weeping boy and girl again and again. The old man kissed them both in silence, and passionately wrung their manacled hands. Then turned away weeping.

Maxwell had sat down on a broken cart far over in a corner of the yard. He had touched the nadir of human misery, and sat in the growing darkness, his head bent forward and supported by his hands. He was wondering if on earth there were then a more unhappy man than himself. He had made a magnificent attempt and had utterly and hopelessly failed. Fate was against him; and worse than Fate, circumstances over which he had no control. The idea that he had previously entertained, of lifting up these people, socially and intellectually, appeared now so ludicrous that he actually laughed sardonically at himself. To think of dining with the sword of Damocles raising your scalp was considered absurd, he thought; but to think of lifting up this race with that frightful incubus of landlordism weighing on it, night and day, was preposterous. There is no room in an Irish peasant's cabin for books. No room for anything but the mattock and the spade to make gold for strangers.

And yet under this awful cloud of depression he saw a gleam of light — the change in his own circumstances, the possibility of his doing better in another sphere of action. But all this belonged to the higher and more speculative part of his undertaking. But Maxwell, too,

was emotional. He was so far from being a mere doctrinaire and enthusiast, that even his dismal failure would have been supportable, but that he felt so deeply for the troubles that had fallen so swiftly on this beloved household, where, looking back, he saw that he had been comparatively happy. He knew well it was Netterville's wounded pride and vanity that had precipitated this awful crisis, in the anguish of which he had deeply shared. The sorrows of the little family were his. He felt for the aged father and mother; he felt sorely for the manacled boy and girl, who had been to him brother and sister. He felt for the desolation and ruin; but most of all he felt that he, in some mysterious manner, had come to be regarded as a deadly and treacherous enemy. He knew that the few words he had spoken to Hamberton and the sheriff were wrongly interpreted; but this did not account for the sudden change in the whole tone and temper of the family towards him. The words addressed to him by Pierry and Debbie hinted at something strange and mysterious. Yes; he parted with them now full of kindness and gratitude to them; but with their minds poisoned against him. Traitor! Ingrate! Houseless! Homeless! Surely the night-shades never gathered around a more miserable man.

PART III

CHAPTER XXIV

BEFORE THE FOOTLIGHTS

In the snug, well appointed drawing-room of a handsome villa outside Dublin, a small but very select party of Dublin fashionables was gathered at the close of a cold evening early in the March of this year. The lawn in front sloped down to the sea; and on a summer evening the view across Dublin Bay, down along the coast, to where Bray Head juts out and frames the picture in green and gold, would be almost unrivalled. This evening, with the cold east wind blowing back to the shore the plumes of smoke from cross-Channel steamers, the lawn looked gray and sad in the growing twilight; but in the large bay-window that jutted over the basement in the villa, there was a pretty picture that lent a little light and beauty to the scene. A fair, tall woman in evening dress was turning over the pages of an album or pictorial story book for the delectation of a little boy, whose yellow ringlets ran over his dark blue velvet dress, and hid the broad collar of fine lace that covered his shoulders and breast. The child looked intensely pleased with the amusement. The lady looked tired and weary. But suddenly that aspect of sadness disappeared, and she appeared to make a violent effort in the transformation, for she drew herself up to her full height, smiled softly, and gently toyed with her rings, when a gentleman came

forward, spoke a few pleasant words, drew the boy gently aside, and pulled down the blinds, against which instantly shone the soft ruby light from the chandelier inside.

It was the evil quarter-hour before dinner — the *pars gelida* before that daily holocaust of society, when the guests are frozen by first introductions or limited acquaintance; when the hostess is frozen by frightful anticipations of spoiled viands, kitchen catastrophes, yawning intervals between courses, and all the other dread possibilities of the dinner-table; when the waiters are frozen into frigid icicles of propriety and decorum; and probably the only warm person under the roof is the cook. Mabel Outram, who had just returned from the darkness and screened lights of the window, where she could toy with a boy's curls and forget herself, now put on her stage appearance before the footlights, and looked cold and dignified as the rest, which coldness did not in the least degree thaw out even when she knew she was an object of admiration; and had overheard a little prim old lady, who had been watching her through a tortoise-shell pince-nez, whisper:

"A daughter of the Gods, divinely fair."

And cold and silent and watchful was Ralph Outram as he leaned against the marble mantelpiece, and listened cynically to the dreary platitudes of a certain professor of ethnology, who was pouring into his ears a lot of gratuitous information about the very India from which Outram had so lately come. He listened with lifted eyebrows and scornful lips to the bookish learning of the

amiable but tiresome pedant; and when the latter, tapping him confidentially on his coat-sleeve, asked:

"But you will clear up one point for me, on ethnological grounds only, — not on historical, or theological, or philosophical grounds, but on ethnological — because really there is no science worth speaking of in the end but ethnology, — what is this I was going to ask? Oh, yes! The ethnological explanation of the very singular fact that a handful of men, say fifty thousand at most, can keep down, subdue, and control some hundreds of millions of (what I am led by my rather extensive reading to believe) the most intelligent and highly-cultured races on the earth?"

Outram looked his questioner all over, pulled his red, bristling moustache, and answered sententiously and with pauses between the words:

"The whip — and — the — sop!"

"Wha — what?" said the professor, staring at him.

"The whip — and — the — sop!" repeated Outram, with slower and more prolonged pauses.

"I don't quite understand, my dear friend," said the professor. "You military men have the advantage of us literary folk, in that you can express yourselves laconically, and, if I may use the expression, emphatically. The whip — and — the — sop? I never heard of such things, and I feel sure I have read every book that was ever written about India."

"You won't find these things in books," said Outram.

"Where then?" asked the professor.

"In real life," answered Outram, "of which books are but a fallacious and lying presentment. India is gov-

erned," he continued, as the professor was about to make a strong protest, "by two things — the shades of Hastings, Clive, Gough, Havelock, and others; and is held down, *strapped* down," he said, with vivacity, "by the whip — and the sop. The sop is held in the left hand, and is extended to those who are worth it. The whip is held in the right hand behind the back — thus, and they who won't accept the sop must accept the whip; and it is the less pleasant of the two."

"Dear, dear, you surprise me very much," said the mystified professor, "I must take a note of this. It is most interesting. The whip — and — the — sop. The whip in the left hand to be extended first; and whosoever does not take the whip must swallow the sop. Most interesting from an ethnol —"

But just then the amiable professor had to be recalled to social duties; and, as he passed into the dining-room, his partner was much embarrassed by hearing him murmur:

"The whip and the sop! The — whip — and — the — sop! Dear me! Strange I never heard of such things before!"

Mabel and Outram were the guests of the evening, and occupied the places of honour next the host and hostess; and the dinner drew wearily along. Its monotony was broken for Mabel by three events. The first was, that she was asked more than once by the little amiable old lady of the tortoise-shell pince-nez, who had flattered her with such consummate subtlety in the drawing-room, whether she did not admire very much a spray of lilies of the valley, which sparkled across the delicate background of a clump of maiden-hair fern; and a magnificent bunch of

chrysanthemums, a name which the old lady feigned several times to forget, although lost in admiration of the superb browns and coral reds of the winter flower. The second was a startling statement made by a young lady that she had a pet poodle that would easily fit into, and be decidedly comfortable, in one of the ruby finger-glasses on the table. The third was an animated discussion that was going on at the further end of the table within the circle dominated by the hostess, and limited to Outram and the professor.

The latter had never got over his surprise at the *naïve* explanation of British supremacy in India that had been given by Outram; and, as he reflected during the pauses of the dinner courses, he became convinced that either Outram, like many other Anglo-Indians of whom he had heard, was profoundly ignorant of the bearings of the vast question propounded by himself, or else was deliberately mocking him. This last idea gradually became a certainty, as he observed the cynical manner in which Outram seemed to treat every question, social or otherwise, that came up for discussion at table; and being a man of profound erudition and enjoying a European reputation, he was much annoyed at the contemptuous flippancy of this officer. He had a swift revenge.

A young girl, questioning Outram about Hindoo life and manners, hinted her idea that the Bráhmins were a class of men distinguished by rare holiness of life and detachment from all earthly things. This was quite enough to awaken all the angry contempt of Outram for subject races of any kind.

"There is no measuring the depths of ignorance," he

said, "that exist amongst all Europeans on this subject. Books are written that deserve only to be burned by the common hangman. You will see articles in the *Fortnightly* and *Nineteenth Century* that should not be written by a clerk in a London counting-house. Bráhmins pious? Bráhmins disinterested? We will soon hear that a Jew hath a conscience; or that a Fakir is clean."

The professor was gently toying with his dessert-fork; and he looked up with a smile of bland satisfaction mantling his rosy face, framed in silver-white whiskers.

"I fear," he said, as if about to answer some foolish question put by a beardless undergraduate, "that Mr. Outram is too sweeping in his observations. There are distinctions in this matter as in all things else. There is, of course, a certain class of low-caste Bráhmins, — the Bráhmin Sowkar, or the Márwárree, — a kind of priestly Shylocks, who are usurious and exacting. But, then, there is also the Chitpáwan or Kônkanee Bráhmin, who have given us in India leading lights in every department of social and political life."

And the professor laid down his fork, and looked around, as if he would ask, Is there any other point on which you would desire to be enlightened?

Outram scowled at him with all the contempt of an ancient expert for a young amateur; and he asked in a chilling way:

"The professor has been in India, I presume?"

"Oh, no, not at all," said the professor. The admission generally brings a blush of inferiority with it; but not so with the professor. "It is a pleasure in store — a pleasure in store!"

"But I have," said Outram, with significance. "I have only just returned from fifteen years' service in every part of India from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin."

"And it was I," said the professor with modest assurance, "who wrote the article on 'The Bráhmins' for the *Encyclopædia Indica*."

It was a triumph. Everyone felt it. The sympathy of the entire table was with the learned professor. Mabel was listening with a little embarrassment, but much interest.

"And so you hold, sir," said Outram, icily, "that you can gather more information about a people or a race from books — I presume you read a great deal on the subject?"

"I had to consult no less than three hundred and twenty-seven authors," said the professor, "and to employ two amanuenses, in order to expedite the work."

"A great cry and little wool," said Outram, offensively. "And do you still think that the reading of books can give as close an insight into the habits of a people as direct interccurse and observation?"

"Certainly," said the amiable professor, not at all heeding the insult, "certainly, my dear sir. Is it not clear that the unprejudiced observations of many persons, who have taken their ideas either from personal experience, or the foresight of others, should count more for truth than the observations of one man, who possibly — I do not say it applies to you — possibly, may have been unable to divest himself of the prejudices of an official?"

It sounded reasonable to all but Outram. He answered again sharply:

"I have seen certain things, and can testify to them. You have never seen them, and cannot testify. Which is the more likely to have grasped the truth?"

"Certainly I who have not seen these things," said the professor.

"I think we shall leave the gentlemen to discuss these questions over their cigars," said the hostess, rising. "They are too deep for us poor women!"

And with that sad confession of inferiority, the ladies swept from the dining-room.

When, after some little time, the gentlemen rejoined them, it was quite clear there was not only an armistice, but a positive alliance between the professor and his antagonist. Nay, the professor had become enthusiastic about Outram, and had scribbled over half a note-book with learned jottings for future reference. Blessed cigars! Blessed Lady Nicotine! How could anyone, least of all a king, have written against thee, thou peacemaker amongst men?

"We mustn't," said the professor, as he sat comfortably upon a sofa, propped with pillows, and held his teacup in his left hand, whilst he waved his right hand gently, "we mustn't again introduce learned ethnological discussions amongst ladies; but my friend, Mr. Outram, has been just telling us a story, — an experience of Indian life, which will bear repetition and be not quite out of place in a drawing-room. Ahem!"

Outram drew his red eyebrows together in a kind of scowl, but instantly recovered himself, and toying with a teaspoon, he said:

"The professor is too kind. I fear the story is not quite

so interesting as his benevolence would lead you to suppose!"

"Let us be judges of that, Mr. Outram," said his hostess. "It will have the merit of novelty to us all, except, of course, Mrs. Outram."

"Don't except me, please," said Mabel. "I do not recollect any incident in Mr. Outram's Indian life that would merit the professor's encomiums."

There was a note — a slight note of sarcasm here; and Outram winced under it. But he threw the feeling aside gaily.

"Quite true. I did not deem it sufficiently interesting to speak of it before. It was a remark of Professor Masson's that elicited it. If the narrative has a leaden ring in it, blame the professor, not me."

He was silent for a few minutes, as if pondering over the incident. Then he said:

"It occurred in the Mahratta country, during one of these periods of famine that recur so frequently in India. The Mahrattas are a fierce warlike tribe, with whom we have had some trouble —"

"I beg pardon," said the professor, forgetting himself for a moment. "Did you say the Mahrattas were — I beg pardon. Yes! Yes! you are quite right."

A young lady, during the awkward pause, was heard murmuring:

"Where in wild Mahratta battle fell my father, evil-starred."

"Well," continued Outram. "The Mahrattas, as I was saying, are a fierce warlike tribe. There would be no finer class of men in India than the "Desh" Mahrattas,

were it not for these wild Bráhmins, who would corrupt the unfallen angels. But they are superstitious, believe in the existence of gods, and all that kind of thing. And, as a result, they are sometimes cruel. Well, during one of those periodical famines, when the people were dying like flies, one poor woman of high caste happened to be among the victims, and she left behind her a little child, a girl, then not more than three or four years old. There were no other relatives; and one of these vile Bráhmin priests (Poojárees they call them in some places) suggested that the anger of a certain female divinity should be propitiated by the sacrifice of this child. They did not put the child to death; they feared British vengeance and justice. They simply exposed the child at the foot of a hideous, beastly, vulgar image of this amiable goddess. What they expected was obvious. Not that Siva or any other piece of woodwork would destroy the child; but that a panther or a tiger would stray that way, and do the work of sacrifice.

"A good Mussulman, however, like the Samaritan of old, passed that way, and although he ran a fearful risk, he rescued the child, and kept her in hiding for some time. To throw the wretched fanatics off the track, he had a few lambs' or kidlings' bones scattered about the place. After some years, he took back the child, and kept her in his own house. But he had no sooner done so than a fierce storm arose. Questions were asked that could not be answered; inquiries were made that could not be shelved; and in the end the good man was subjected to such obloquy and calumny that he determined to part with the girl, although she had become as dear to him as

a daughter. People at home, who read books," here Outram glanced at the professor, "are at liberty to form their own crude opinions about foreign races; but I tell you," here Outram's voice became so fierce and hoarse that the ladies started, "that it needs experience of those conquered and half-savage tribes to understand their devilish machinations. Fortunately, like your good Irish here, they hiss and spit at each other, and would sell their fathers for a rupee; and this alone makes their subjection easy."

"Well," he continued more calmly, as if he were freeing himself from all personal interest in the matter, "it then became a question where Bállajee Chitnees could send his adopted child, whom he had called Sátára. At length he sent her far up the country to a fellow-Mussulman, reputed pious and honourable; but even there, vengeance, Brahminical vengeance, followed the girl, and after some months her new protector was glad to part with her to a certain British official, who, as he knew well, snapped his fingers at the whole tribe of Bráhmins and Mahomedans.

"Under his protection she grew up, a tall, thin girl, with soft, black eyes, lustreless, unless when excited, and then, by all the gods of India, you never saw such sheet-lightning as that which shot and played beneath that girl's forehead."

He stopped a moment as if conjuring up that figure. He did not notice his wife's eyes fixed steadily upon him with awakened curiosity.

"I forgot to say," he continued, "that she had not a bawbee in the way of money, but there was found in her

garments a ring, a strange intaglio, resembling those single eyes in triangles which sometimes represent the Trinity in Christian countries. The eye was cut deep into a kind of opalesque stone, and the latter was ringed in solid gold in the shape of a cobra. This does not sound very strange. What is strange is, that in the light the stone was a dead, dull pearly thing; but in the dark it seemed to flame and smoke, just as phosphorus does. And there was a strange and ominous similarity between the flames of that intaglio and those which shot across that girl's eyes when she grew excited. Whether the ring was of value in a lapidary's eyes I cannot say. Some would think the stone valuable in itself; some thought it valueless. But it was a talisman, reputed to have the power of warding off death from the wearer —"

"But, my dear sir," interrupted the professor, "that's quite impossible — superstitious you know! Mere relics of Paganism. I wrote an article on amulets many years ago for the *Encyclopædia Britannica* — the gist of which was that these things were all right for the Middle Ages — Holy Grails, Lady of Shalott, Magic Mirrors, etc., but they are completely out of place in the nineteenth century."

"Do you think so?" drawled Outram. "There is one wise saw, professor, I would recommend for your consideration.

"There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio" —

You know the rest. Anyone who has been in the East, and has not merely read of it, will tell you that Europeans

had better restrain their expressions of omniscience when dealing with these questions. At any rate, I can testify that more than once I escaped a sudden death whilst wearing that ring. Call it coincidence if you please. I think it was more."

"But the story, the story, Mr. Outram," exclaimed the ladies. "What became of Sátára?"

"Oh, Sátára! Well, she grew up rapidly under her British protector and developed extraordinary powers. She could do what she pleased with her wonderful hands — string beads and corals, arranging colours in a way that would make Europeans despair; she could carve metals in a kind of *repoussé* work that was a miracle to behold; she could cut intaglios and raise cameos on all kinds of stones; and shape and polish alabaster and other vases until they shone like precious stones. And she interwove with all her work a kind of symbolism, never allowing the smallest thing to pass from her hands without some mute lesson or warning conveyed in a sign, sometimes almost imperceptible, but always clear to the initiated. Where she learned that symbolism no one could tell. Probably in the mountains under Poojárees or Thibetan Lamas, who had strayed across the frontier, and who seem to know all that is worth knowing about the other world.

"Well, things went on in this way for some years. Various attempts were made to kidnap the girl; but she was safe under the English flag. Then a strange thing occurred. Unknown to himself, Sátára had contracted a very strong affection for her protector; and one day, in a fit of jealousy, she upbraided him in terrible language

for some imagined slight. He resented it and turned her from the house. Then he relented and brought her back. She used to hang around his room, chaunting strange poems in her native dialect:

"'What has his slave done to anger thee, Son of the Priests of the Sun! All night long have I lain flat on my face on my bed; and there was no one to give me food or drink. Who was the Mighty One that saved me from the anger of Siva and the teeth of the serpent of the desert? Who was raised up by the full speech of the gods to be my father; and who hath taken the place of Medudu, my brother? And shall I be cast away from before the face of my Lord; and nevermore break his bread and wait upon Him?'

"This was all very well; but again the same awful jealousy broke out, and again she was dismissed.

"The third time she came again, purring and fawning around him, like a wild cat; and again he drove her forth. She went away meekly, having first deposited the ring on his dressing-table with a few kind words of farewell. But next morning, when he awoke, he found himself all coated as with silver. He was a leper from head to heel."

The ladies cowered together and uttered little shrieks. But Outram went on:

"He came down to Madras, where I met him. For six months the doctors were dosing him with all kinds of medicine; and at last he was partially cured. Some fakirs offered to cure him wholly by incantations; but he would have none of them. When I was coming home, he gave me the magic ring."

"Where is it? Show it to us!" exclaimed the company.

"Not now, not now!" he said. "My wife —"

Here for the first time he glanced towards Mabel. White as alabaster, she lay back on the pillows of the sofa in a swoon that seemed like Death.

CHAPTER XXV

THE NEW OVERSEER

Hugh Hamberton and his ward had accompanied the mournful procession from Lisheen as far as the main road, when, on a sudden thought, the former wheeled round his horse, and both rode back to the farm-yard. The old people were still sitting disconsolate on the wreck of their little household furniture, and Hamberton approached them with a proposal to come over and settle down near Brandon Hall.

"You cannot stay here," he said kindly, "there is no shelter for you. Come with me, and I shall put you in a new cottage, and get work for you."

They thanked him; but no!

"Here I was born, and here my father and mother lived before me," said the old woman. "An' here I was married, and my children first saw the light. I cannot lave it now till I lave it for the last time."

"But you have no shelter, no house room," pleaded Hamberton. "You cannot remain here to perish with cold and hunger."

"No matter," was the reply. "God is good! We'll make a little bed for ourselves in the cow-house or barn —"

"But that will be illegal possession, and you can be arrested," said Hamberton, his British ideas of the supremacy of the law rising above every other consideration.

"So much the better," said the old woman, "we can thin go and jine our poor children, and be all together agin."

Disappointed, and almost angry at such stubbornness, Hamberton was about to leave the yard, when he saw the solitary figure of Maxwell bent together in the growing dusk. He rode over, and tapped him lightly on the shoulder.

"Come, my man," he said, "you have no business here any longer."

Maxwell arose. His face was so drawn and pallid from suffering, that Hamberton hardly knew him.

"Yes. Thank you very much. I will go," Maxwell said.

"Then we'll ride over, and send a trap for you," said Hamberton.

"No, no, I shall walk," said Maxwell. "It is only a matter of a few hours."

"But you look weak and suffering," said Claire Moulton. "We'll send the trap and you can be with us sooner than if you walked."

"No, no; thank you ever so much," he said. "The truth is, I am anxious to get away from this place as speedily as possible."

"Very good, then," said Hamberton. "We shall ride over, and make things ready for you. Go straight to Donegan's cottage. Donegan! You'll remember?"

"Yes, thank you. I shall be there between eight and nine o'clock." And Hamberton and his ward rode away.

Maxwell looked around the wretched place and picked out of the cottage *débris* his little valise, now much dilapi-

dated. He went slowly across the yard, and accosted the desolate old people.

"I'm going away," he said humbly, "perhaps for ever. I cannot leave your hospitable house without thanking you for all your goodness and kindness to me while I was with you."

"And the devil's own bad return you made," said the old man turning away.

"You do not understand. Some day I will explain; and all will be cleared up," said Maxwell, in a pleading, humble way.

"It will," said the old man, bitterly. "It will be cleared up that we kep' a rogue and a thraitor under our roof."

"Asy now, asy, Owen," said his good wife. "Shure, how do we know? In any case, it was for the love of God we tuk you in an' kep' you. An' 'tis for the love of the same God, we forgive you, if you have done anythin' agin us."

"Then, you'll say good-bye?" he said, holding out his hand.

With the old instinct, the poor woman wiped her clammy hand on her check apron, and put it in his palm.

"Say 'God bless you!' also," he asked.

"Yes, good-bye, and God bless you," said the pious old woman. "Sure a prayer like that can harrum no wan!"

"God will reward you!" he said, turning mournfully away.

It was a long and weary road that led to the village of Cahercon, nestling under the mighty shadow of Brandon Hill, and touching the hem of the mighty ocean in the

recesses of Brandon Bay. He had hardly gone a mile from Lisheen, when the hills sloped up precipitously, and he saw he had to make his way through a mountain pass or gorge that shelved upwards and upwards, until it touched the summit, and then sloped down to the valleys through which the Ownamore makes its way to the sea. It was a lonely walk. The moment he entered the gorge, nothing could be seen but the blue stars glinting softly down, all their vast splendours shorn away by distance, until they became but points of light in the illimitable blackness of space.

He was hungry and weak and melancholy, and it is these things that make men meditative. And Maxwell's thoughts ran back to the problem he had suggested to himself so many years ago in Trinity; and, looking down on the past few months he had spent there in that lonely valley, and looking up at the heavens, so solemn, so sad, so silent, he heard himself muttering: "Yes.

> We are such stuff as dreams are made on,
> And our little life is rounded with a sleep."

And the thought came uppermost: Would it not be as well, here and now, in this remote mountain valley, to lie down and seek the rest that is eternal? For old sayings, old songs, old utterances came upward, and he thought:

> "And if there be no meeting past the grave,
> If all is darkness, silence, yet 'tis rest;
> Be not afraid, ye waiting hearts that weep,
> For God still giveth His beloved sleep,
> And if an endless sleep He wills — so best."

Suppose then, he considered, I should now turn aside from this road, and lie down on the wet bracken or furze there

in some mountain cavity, where the eye of man seldom rests; and suppose that in a few days or weeks some shepherd's dog should find me. There would be an inquest; and the verdict: "Tramp, died from hunger and exposure. Name unknown. Supposed deserter, etc.," and then all would be over. No more problems, no more speculations. Absorbed in the Infinite like all the many millions before and after me! That is all.

It was but a fancy, a dream occasioned by hunger. But he shook it aside as a cowardly suggestion; and had he not a mission, growing every day more interesting and absorbing as he mixed more freely with his fellow-beings? He turned aside where a labourer's cottage fronted the road, across which the ruddy light from the fireplace streamed. The family were at their frugal supper. Bareheaded, the father sat at the head of the table, his children grouped around him. The good housewife was going about busily. It was a picture of life, social happiness, comfort, love, consecrated by poverty.

"God save you!" said Maxwell, in the country dialect. He had learned so much.

"God save you kindly," was the response. There certainly was some reserve. Tramps were constantly coming around, and frightening women and children. And Maxwell knew his appearance was hardly respectable.

"I'm weak with hunger!" said Maxwell.

"That's a dizase that's aisily cured," said the man of the house. "Here, Paudheen, git out o' that, and give your chair to the stranger."

Paudheen, with his mouth crammed with potatoes, reluctantly rose, carrying with him an armful of potatoes.

Maxwell sat down, eagerly swallowed some home-made bread and milk, and turned to go.

"You're in a mightly hurry intirely," said the man of the house.

"I must be at Cahercon to-night," said Maxwell, taking up his valise.

"Oh, that's where the grate gintleman lives," said his host.

"Mr. Hamberton? Yes. I have been evicted with the rest of the family down there at Lisheen to-day; and am offered employment by Mr. Hamberton."

"Wisha, were you now? Sit down and tell us all about it, man," said the host. "We hard of the eviction; but that's all. Tell us all about it."

It was the smallest recompense he could make for the generous hospitality offered him. But he delayed only a little time, and soon got out again under the stars.

His way now lay through a deep defile in the mountains, which rose black and threatening at his right hand. At the left side there was after a time a deep declivity broadening out into a plain; and he thought he saw the glint of the stars in a tiny lake, and heard the murmur of a river on its way to the sea. That river he soon had to cross, and down on the level road he made his way swiftly forward, till the lights of the little hamlet broke across his way. He found Donegan's house easily, and had a warm welcome. The first thing that struck him was the sense of comfort and perfect neatness all around the cottage, contrasting so strongly with the discomfort and sordid surroundings at Lisheen. The floor was tiled and spotless, there was a large range whose steels shone

in the lamplight, the dresser was well filled with plates and dishes and tins, the children were gathered around the kitchen table, reading by the light of a lamp, whose opal shade threw a golden light on their books. Donegan was a tall, thin, Celtic figure, sinewy, clean, alert, with deep blue eyes shining out from beneath black eyebrows. His wife was a small, blonde woman, very quietly but carefully dressed. She came forward without any bustle, and taking the valise from Maxwell's hand, she said:

"You must be both tired and hungry."

"I am both," he said cheerfully, his spirits rising with the brightness of the scene around him. "But I think I've come to the right place for both."

"Well, sit down, and make yourself at home," she said. "I'll have a cup of tea and a couple of eggs for you in a minit."

"You come from the eviction at Lisheen?" said her husband, bending his keen eyes on Maxwell.

"Yes," said the latter. "It has been a sad and a trying day." He said no more but looked vacantly at the range fire.

After supper he was shown into a small, neat bedroom, poorly but tastefully furnished. There was a camp bed in a corner. The linens were spotless, the blankets soft and clean. The counterpane was of cotton with a heavy, honeycomb pattern. There was a washstand, a dressing-table of deal, and a small strip of carpet near the bed. A few pious pictures decorated the papered walls. He crept swiftly into bed, and the sense of comfort on the hard mattress and beneath the cold, clean sheets kept him awake for a while. He thought that then and there was

the beginning of a change in his fortunes, and the end of his trials. But his thoughts would revert to the events of the day just passed — the mournful horror of which was oppressive. He shook it off, as all troubles should be thrust aside by great thoughts. And great thoughts — thoughts of self-sacrifice and benevolence, thoughts of human fellowship cemented by noble actions, thoughts of a glorious surprise for the poor people with whom his life had been so strangely linked, of their resurrection and subsequent life, freed from all lower cares for ever; wider and nobler thoughts of the regeneration of a whole race to be effected by new methods on a broad scale of humanitarianism and justice — flooded his soul and seemed to fill him with a new sense of exaltation and happiness, under which he passed away into the realms of unconsciousness and happy dreams.

One of these disturbed him much. It was just before the dawn. And it woke him up with a merry peal of bells, as Donegan burst into his room.

"That's the seven o'clock bell. You're not to mind it, the masther said, this morning. I'm off."

He was in such a mighty hurry that when he returned at twelve o'clock to dinner, Maxwell could not help interrogating him.

"Oh, begor," he said. "If we aren't inside the works at the lasht shtroke of the bell, it manes a quarther's wages docked for that day."

"Smart practice!" thought Maxwell. "But," he said, "you have excellent wages!"

"Divel a betther!" said Donegan. "A pound a week, house free, two tons of coal at Christmas, and a quarther

of garden. Thin herself airns a few shillings by washin,' an' all round we are fairly thrated enough!"

"An' quite satisfied, of course?" said Maxwell.

"Well, ye-es," said Donegan. "There was wan fella wanted to make a fortin all of a heap; but begobs he came to grief. I'll tell you the shthory to-night. But the masther would like to see you to-day."

"Where?" said Maxwell. "At the works?"

"No. Up at the grate house," said Donegan. "He said about three or four o'clock."

"All right. I shall be there," said Maxwell.

It was an eventful interview, and the most eventful feature of it was, that Maxwell noticed on his entrance into the dining-room, to which he was most reluctantly introduced by the liveried footman, that he was treated with some deference, although Hamberton addressed him brusquely; and that Miss Moulton seemed unable to rest her eyes on her work but was watching him intently. It was the first time since he left Dublin that he was in a room that recalled by its surroundings old associations, and everything in the furniture, the hangings, the sideboard, the glass and silver, the noble pictures, seemed to smite his senses with eager and pleasant suggestions. The contrast between such elegance, and between the whole appearance of this gentleman and lady and his own shabbiness, smote him with shame and he blushed and fumbled uneasily with his worn and broken hat.

"Sit down," said Hamberton. "Are you all right after your journey? Was Donegan's all right?"

"Yes," said Maxwell. "I feel well this morning. The Donegans were very kind."

"Look here, Maxwell," said Hamberton, playing with a paper-knife, but watching his visitor keenly, "you're a bit of a mystery, you know. At least, it is quite clear you don't belong to the people around here. By the way, Claire, isn't Maxwell our landlord's name?"

"Yes," said Claire. "That's his name."

"And a d—d bad landlord he is," said Hamberton. "I had the devil's work to get a lease from the fellow or his agent for this place. He had as much fuss over it as if we were buying land in Belgravia. Well, Maxwell, you're a mystery, but you have an indefeasible right to keep your own secrets, and I'm the last man in the world to break in on your privacy. You're not strong, so I have determined to make you time-keeper and overseer in these works. Bells go at seven, twelve, one, and six. Half-time on Saturday. Every man must be inside the gate at the last stroke of bells or lose a quarter. Do you understand?"

Maxwell nodded.

"You'll also hold yourself in readiness to meet me at any time, and do any account work or other I shall select. Your wages — one pound a week, cottage furnished and free. You're not married?"

Maxwell started, and, forgetting his part for the moment, looked towards Miss Moulton and smiled. Strange to say, she smiled back, and a faint tinge ran over her face and forehead.

"All right. Then we'll get an old woman to do the necessary things for you. Nance Brien? Would she do, Claire?"

"Yes," said Miss Moulton, abstractedly.

"Donegan will show you your cottage," said Hamberton, bringing the interview to a conclusion. "Anything else?" he asked, as Maxwell seemed to hesitate.

"No, but —"

"Say it out, man, whatever it is," said Hamberton.

"Well, you see, I'm very shabby in dress," said Maxwell, with a faint blush. "I know I'm presuming too much, but perhaps you would advance —"

"No," thundered Hamberton. "I never advance wages. But I'll see to it. Your clothes are good enough for every-day work. I suppose 'tis Sunday you're thinking of. By the way, what religion do you profess?"

"Well, Church of Ireland," said Maxwell.

"Very good. But we have no church here, thank Heaven. What have you been doing for the last few months on Sundays?"

"Smoked a cigarette whenever I could get it, and read Shakespeare," said Maxwell.

"Read Shakespeare," echoed Hamberton. "You're the very man I want. Have you read any other authors?"

"Yes. All," said Maxwell, recounting all his literary acquaintances, ending with Ibsen and Tolstoy.

"The man I'm looking for all my life," said Hamberton, half-musingly. "I don't ask how you have become acquainted with all the demigods of literature, but you can help me materially to build up the social and intellectual character of my people. Have you any objection, or is it in your line?"

"It has been the dream of my life," said Maxwell. "It is why I am here."

"Then you have had experience," said Hamberton.

"How did you succeed with these poor people over at Lisheen?"

"I dared not even attempt it," he replied.

"Dared not?"

"Yes — dared not," said Maxwell, with some heat, that glowed through his eyes and face. "How could I speak of such things to a people sunk in all kinds of abject poverty, with the hand of the bailiff ever on their doors, and the awful shadow of landlordism glooming over all? What time had they for such things? From cock-crow to sundown, it was work, work, work, and work not for themselves but for another. Where's the use of talking about the resurrection of a people until you remove the stone from the door of their sepulchre? You cannot have a nation without manhood; you cannot have manhood without education, you cannot have education without leisure and freedom from sordid cares, and you cannot have the latter until landlordism is removed wholly and entirely from the land. We are Protestants in some shape or form. But I tell you, we would have succeeded in making our Catholic countrymen brutes were it not for the saving power and grace of their religion. Don't wonder at my heat, Mr. Hamberton, Miss Moulton. If someone doesn't speak, the very stones will cry out against us."

"True, my young friend, true. I wish to Heaven your namesake, Maxwell, was listening to you. Meanwhile, it is a good rule to find the work nearest to your hand and do it. I'll place at your disposal all the books you need."

CHAPTER XXVI

DEPOSITIONS

THE trial of Pierce and Debbie McAuliffe was swift; the judgment summary and vindictive. These were the days when Ireland was governed by satraps — half-pay officers, returned Indians, etc., and when the law was stretched to the utmost against agrarian offences of every kind. The resistance to eviction was grave enough, the wounding of the officer made it heinous. The two young people were sentenced to six months hard labour, and then to find sureties for good behaviour for twelve months afterwards.

Young and healthy, they bore bravely up against the rigours of confinement for some weeks. Then the meagre food began to tell on constitutions used to plentiful, if hard, fare. Pierce bit his lip and made no complaint. But, after the lapse of a couple of months the want of food weakened Debbie's mind, and, losing all her pride of being a victim of English law, she began to brood over her sorrows and losses. The dread solitary confinement, too, began to affect her mind. With no intellectual resources, hardly able to read, she was thrown in upon herself, and the mind, like a mill without grist, began to grind terribly upon itself. Strange hallucinations would arise, dreams within dreams, even in her waking moments; and the centre of the horrible maelstrom of thought was

ever and always Maxwell. By degrees the angry thoughts that would come uppermost against him, and which in the beginning she suppressed with an effort, began to conquer her; and she raged in silence against him, all her smothered and untold affection tortured into ungovernable hate.

At last one day a visitor told her that Maxwell was installed prime favourite at Brandon Hall and had been transformed from the aspect and condition of a tramp or labourer into the decent costume and appearance of an overseer. Nay, he had been actually seen out at sea in a boat with Miss Moulton. That same day her father and mother were brought in by the police from Lisheen. They had retaken possession of the house, were again evicted and warned. They again defied the law, and illegally broke the padlocks that had been placed on the doors and were now arrested on the charge. The thought drove the girl wild. She paced up and down her narrow cell, her hands clutched fiercely behind her back. Then, in a sudden but not unpremeditated impulse, she rang her bell violently, and the wardress appeared.

"I wants to see the Governor," said Debbie, doggedly.

"The Governor?" echoed the wardress, doubtingly.

"Yes," said Debbie, excitedly. "I wants to see the Governor, and at wanst."

"Very well," said the wardress, locking the door carefully and departing on the strange errand.

She returned quickly and informed Debbie that the Governor would see her after dinner.

"Av he knew what I wants him for, he'd see me now," said Debbie. "I may change me mind."

"Come, then," said the wardress.

The Governor sat at his desk in his little office near the front entrance to the prison. He was an old man, pale and grave, like one who had had much responsibility and had been well schooled by experience. He beckoned to the girl to be seated, and ordered the wardress to remain.

"I wants to see you alone," said Debbie, with an air of defiance.

"That cannot be, my good girl," said the Governor. "You have something to say, or some complaint to make, and we must have a witness."

"Whin the gintlemen comes around, they sees the prisoners alone in their cells without anny witnesses," said Debbie.

"True. But that is for complaints against officials. If you have any complaint against Wardress Hickson, I shall take it in her absence."

Debbie moistened her dry lips and rubbed her clammy hands on her check apron.

"'Tis no complaint I have agen any of ye," she said. 'Tis a murdherer that I wants to get what he desarves."

"Do you mean a man who has actually committed a murder," said the Governor, "or do you mean a ne'er-do-well, who ought to be in gaol?"

"I mane a man who killed a girl," said Debbie, "and whose conscience is throubling him, night and day, over it."

"That is a very serious charge, my good girl," said the Governor. "You understand the consequences, and that you will be bound to appear against this man?"

Nature began to struggle against the passion for revenge

in the girl's breast, but she held it down firmly and answered:

"I do. I only want him to get what he desarves."

"Very well, then," said the Governor, drawing over a sheet of foolscap. "I shall take notes now of your evidence; you will make your after-depositions on oath before a magistrate. What is your name?"

"Debbie McAuliffe."

"That is Deborah, I suppose. Place of residence?"

"Lisheen."

"Yes, Lisheen," said the Governor. "Now an inmate of her Majesty's prison at Tralee." He continued writing.

"Now, what is the name of the man?"

"Robert Maxle," said Debbie.

"Very good. Trade, or profession, or business? What is he?"

"He was workin' wid us," said Debbie, "as a farm-hand. But I suspects he's somethin' else."

"What do you suspect?"

"Well, some says he's a desarter from the army, but I know he's a gintleman."

"A gentleman?" said the Governor, laying down his pen, and looking searchingly at the girl, and then at the wardress.

"Yes," said Debbie, seeing his incredulity. "Maybe av you lave me tell me shtory me own way, without yer cross-hackling, you'd get at the thruth sooner."

"Very well," said the Governor, taking up his pen again. "But be careful, my good girl. This is more important than you think."

Again Debbie moistened her lips and choked down the

emotion of affection which she had conceived for Maxwell, by steadily keeping his image away from her mind. Then she resumed:

"About six months ago, it may be more or less, a thramp kem to our dure. There was no wan inside but me poor mother. We were all out in the fields. He had nothin' wid him but an ould bag. Me mother gave him somethin' to ate and dhrink, and whin we kem back from the fields me father tuk pity on him, and axed him to shtay wid us, as he couldn't do betther for himself. So he shtayed. We tuk him to be a desarter from the army, becase he looked like a sojer, but I knew from the beginnin' that he wos a gintleman —"

"How did you know that," asked the Governor.

"Be his inside flannels and fine linen whin I was washin' thim," said Debbie with a blush.

"Well?"

"There wor other raysons, too," continued Debbie, "but they were nayther here nor there. At all events he shtayed wid us, workin' a little, ontil about Chrismas, whin wan day, he tuk it into his head to go away. He was goin' out the gate whin I wint afther him and shtopped him, and axed him to come back. He didn't say a worrd, but kem back, an' 'twas well he did, for that night he was down in a ragin' faver. We nursed him, meself and me mother, through that faver," continued Debbie, taking up a corner of her apron, and twisting it around her finger, whilst her tears fell fast at the recollection of those days and nights and all the affectionate attention they had lavished on Maxwell; "we brought him the priesht to console him, although he was not

belongin' to us, ontil at lasht he got well, and was able to set up. Thin, wan day a gentleman and lady called to see him; an' she put her eyes an him, an' from that day out we got no good av him. But me brother sushpected somethin', an' he watched him. He saw enough to make his hair shtand on ind. Maxle, the man, used to be goin' up be himself to a plantation, or screen up over the house, an' there me brother Pierry watched him. He saw him carryin' on sech antics that he got frickened and axed me to go wid him. 'Twas a moonlight night, an' there was a heavy fog, but we could see everything. This man came out from the trees into an open place, and began callin' on the sperrit of the girl he killed, an' goin' up an' down, hether and over, ravin' and tearin' like a madman. I didn't see the ghosht meself, but Pierry, me brother, did. Well, thin, to make a long shtory short, he kep' up this cryin' and moanin' for half an hour and thin he wint through the whole thing agin, murderin' the poor girl and stiflin' her. I wanted to come away, but me brother wouldn't lave me. So we shtopped ontil he kem out agin and began keenin' over the poor corp, an' callin' on all the divils in hell to blasht an' blow him for all he was worth. Then the cool divil lighted his pipe and began to shmoke as if nothin' had happened, an' we kem away dead wid the fright of it."

"But what was the girl's name?" asked the Governor.

"How do I know?" said Debbie. "Sure he wasn't goin' to tell us."

"H'm," said the Governor, musing on the strange story. "And where is this man now?"

"I'm tould he's over at a place called Brandon Hall,"

said Debbie. "An' he's galivantin' about with another girl there. I suppose he'll kill her too."

"Brandon Hall? That's where Mr. Hamberton lives," said the Governor.

"Yes," said Debbie. "An' 'twas he and some girl wid him that kem over and turned him agin us the day we wor thrun out."

"Very well, my good girl," said the Governor, rising. "That will do now for the present. I'll just read over your information from my notes, and you can verify them, and afterwards you can make the usual depositions before a magistrate. But I never heard of the murder of any girl in this neighbourhood. Did you, Mrs. Hickson?"

"No," said Mrs. Hickson. "Not for years around here."

"But this man was from Dublin," insisted Debbie. "I tould you he was a gintleman, an' from far away."

"Oh, very good," said the Governor. "Now listen, and make any corrections you please."

He read over the girl's statements from his notes, slowly and emphatically, dwelling on what he deemed the important points in the narrative. He then asked her whether she was prepared to abide by what she had said. Debbie gave a reluctant answer. The horror of the affair and of its consequences was beginning to smite her with a kind of remorse. She was then asked to sign her name to the paper, which she did with trembling hand. The wardress witnessed it and took her back to her cell.

Left alone with her own thoughts, and reflecting on what she had done, a sudden flood of feeling swept over her weak mind, and nearly broke down her reason. It is

always the case with weakened intellects, that they are goaded into sudden and often irremediable courses under the influence of passion or emotion, and then sink down into corresponding despondency and dread of the very evil they had been so exultant in committing. The evening had come down too, quickly; the darkness was gathering around the lonely girl in her whitewashed cell, and all the phantoms of a highly strung imagination began to assemble around her and torment her. The strong affection she had conceived for Maxwell — the tenderness, of which she was unconscious when she called him back from the road, and which grew into a deeper feeling from the sense of the help and protection she had given to the sick man — now revived, as she dwelt on every particular of their lives. His gentleness, his courage, his unfailing urbanity; the long evenings around the hearth, when he had whiled away the weary hours by stories and such interesting conversation, his deference towards the old people, his patience with rough food and homely bedding and the hardships of rural life; above all, his demeanour towards herself, treating her with the respect due to one of high rank, and never resenting her practical jokes and stinging allusions, — all came back to the lonely hours, until she paced her cell with long, fierce strides, and something like madness seemed to mount into her brain.

She flung herself upon her bed, and tried to calm her agonized brain. In vain she tossed from side to side, rose up, and paced her cell again. Her supper, thin gruel and bread, was passed in through the aperture in the door. She swallowed it half-unconsciously and only because the pangs of hunger were irresistible. At last, when

the hour for retiring came, she knelt down by her bed and began to pray. The old familiar prayers came to her lips, but now without meaning or unction, and she started up, almost shrieking:

"Mother of God in Heaven, have pity on me this night!" and commenced pacing her cell again.

At midnight she lay down undressed, but her restless brain throbbed back over the past, recalling with terrible distinctness all that had occurred, whilst her conscience kept asking, What business was it of hers, if Maxwell had committed murder? Were there not police and detectives, whose business it was to discover these things? And would she not for evermore be branded as an approver? And how could she stand in a court in her prison clothes, and give evidence? And evermore her brain would keep repeating, Too late! Too late! You have taken a step that cannot evermore be retraced.

After some hours of such torture, the wearied brain stopped its wild workings for a moment, and she sank into a troubled sleep. But here again all the sub-consciousness of her mind became furiously wakeful, and she had some fearful dreams, rushing wildly without sequence or cohesion into each other, — a panorama of horrid and repulsive pictures, broken, distorted, and only uniform in their hideousness, as they glided into each other. In the last, she stood perforce on the drop, side by side with Maxwell. She was to die with him. She saw all the lugubrious preparations that were being made for their execution. She seemed not to care, until she thought she heard Maxwell's voice muffled from beneath the white cap: "Debbie, forgive me!" She tried to catch his hand

in a farewell, but her hands were tied together, and in the effort to break the ligature she woke. She felt the cold, damp sweat of terror on her forehead, as the gray, silent dawn crept in through the barred window of her cell.

She rose instantly and violently jerked the bell. The night-wardress appeared.

"I wants to see the Governor, and immajietly," said the half-frantic girl.

"Go back to bed, and keep yourself quiet," said the wardress.

"No, no, no," said Debbie. "I wants to see him at wanst. I tould him a lot o' lies yesterday, and maybe I'll get an innicent man hanged."

"Well, he can't be hanged to-day," said the wardress. "You can see the Governor after breakfast. Lie down, an' try to sleep."

"God help me! There's no more shleep for me," said the poor girl, as the wardress drew out the prison-door and locked it.

After breakfast she saw the Governor again.

"I wants to tell you," she said abruptly, "that I tould a parcel of lies yesterday about that man. I was mad jealous, whin I hard he was keepin' company with another girl over there at Cahercon."

The old man looked at her keenly, but compassionately. He then touched the bell.

"Send Mrs. Hickson here!" he said.

The wardress appeared.

"Mrs. Hickson, has the doctor called yet?"

"No, sir. He'll be here at eleven."

"Well, then, let him see this poor girl first. I think she is a case for Infirmary treatment."

"I'm not sick," said Debbie. "'Tis throuble of mind. Av you tell me that that man — that Maxle won't be hanged, I'll be all right again."

"I think I may promise that," said the Governor. "But you must see the doctor, and get examined. Please see to it, Mrs. Hickson."

And Debbie was placed in the Infirmary that evening.

Meanwhile, the one most interested in this little drama was pursuing his own course with a singular degree of success, and some happiness. He soon perceived that the conditions adapted to the social and intellectual resurrection of the people were here realized, — that is, material comfort and well-being were secured without the nervous dread of being removed or destroyed. This constituted the element of *safety*, the one element that has always been unhappily absent from nearly every department of social life in Ireland. For Hamberton, though a strict disciplinarian over his men, was very just, and even generous with them when he saw there was a disposition to act fairly towards him. Towards Ned Galwey, and such schemers, he was inexorable; and yet, even after Ned's dismissal from the works, Hamberton contrived to perform many a secret act of kindness towards him.

Here then was the foundation for the very work Maxwell had set out to perform, and he threw himself into it with energy. In a short time he had completely gained Hamberton's confidence, and could count on Miss Moulton's co-operation. By degrees, little shelves of books made

their appearance in the cottages — pretty, little cheap editions of standard authors, suited to the people's capacities; the sounds of accordion and concertina were heard every night through the open doors; little dances were got up, and, as the days grew longer, once or twice, little picnics were held away up on Brandon Hill, or out on Brandon Point. Then, one day, Maxwell induced Hamberton to give him the upper loft of the store, where specimens of rare marbles were kept. This he turned into a concert-room with a splendid, wide stage at the end, and here he proposed to give lectures, hold penny readings, and give dramatic entertainments the long nights of winter.

He, too, became an ever-increasing object of interest to Hamberton and his ward. His gentlemanly bearing, his quiet, unostentatious work, his solicitude about the men and their families, made him not only a useful but most interesting co-operator in their work. Sometimes, under pretext of business, Maxwell was invited to lunch at Brandon Hall, and after Hamberton had discovered what a well-stored mind he had, and what a knowledge of books and men, he often asked him up to spend the evening at the Hall, where they talked over all manner of things, — the world of men, their weakness, their meanness, their nobility, the eternal surprises that awaited everyone who made a study of them, — greatness of spirit where one would least expect it, and baseness and brutality where one would look for the highest and loftiest principles of conduct.

One evening the conversation turned on Gladstone's treatment of Gordon at Khartoum, and Maxwell broke

through his usual calm manner and flared up against the treatment of the hero.

"So he is a hero of yours also, Maxwell," said Hamberton. "You know Miss Moulton keeps a lamp burning before his picture, as they do before the Eikons of Russia."

"Yes, he was a rare silent spirit," said Maxwell. "A man who could endure much, who could fight and never lose his humanity, and who had the deepest and most real interest in the very races which he subdued. To have power and not to abuse it seems to me the rarest of all virtues."

"I wish he were at Lisheen the other day," said Hamberton. "He would have an object-lesson in Irish landlordism."

"Yes," said Maxwell. "I wish Gordon had come to Ireland, and looked at things with honest, unprejudiced eyes."

"But he was in Ireland!" said Hamberton. "Did you never hear?"

"Never," said Maxwell. "I should give something to know what he thought."

"Perhaps Miss Moulton would tell you," said Hamberton.

"I have treasured a letter of his, found and published after his death," said Claire Moulton, "in which he speaks sympathetically of the Irish."

"And what does he say about landlords? Tell Maxwell. He may use it in one of his charming lectures to the men."

"Oh! very little! Only that he would sacrifice a thousand pounds to see an Irish landlord come down from

his high estate and live a few months amongst the farmers, and as one of them."

Maxwell's pale face flushed, and then grew more pale, as he looked questioningly from Hamberton to Miss Moulton. But he saw nothing in their faces to lead him to think there was any subtle allusion to himself.

"A safe bet, I should say," he murmured at length.

"And yet where's the impossibility, or the incongruity?" said Hamberton. "Even as a novelty, or an experiment, it would be worth attempting. Coriolanus tried it, Tolstoy is trying it over there in Russia, there was an al Raschid amongst the Arabs. Why should not Irish landlordism, barren of every other good, produce at least one hero?"

"You hardly know them," said Maxwell, musing.

"True. I'm afraid Miss Moulton will die an old maid, for she avers she will marry the impossible hero, whenever he comes her way."

"But I didn't promise to wait for him," said Claire.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE PORPHYRY VASE

THE meditations of Ralph Outram as he stood in his dressing-gown before his glass the morning after the dinner party were not pleasant. Morning meditations, as a rule, are not pleasant. It is only when the blood has begun to course swiftly through the brain, and to shake off the stagnancy where unpleasant visions dwell, that fresher and more exhilarating ideas come upward. But his was not the unpleasantness of anticipations or remorse. Only vexation at having been betrayed into what he called a "tactical blunder." There are some minds to whom tactical mistakes are of far more serious consequence and concern than deadly sin. Outram's was one of these; and, between his teeth, as he performed the duties of his toilet, he cursed that old professor, that treacherous whisky, those opiate cigars, those odious women, for betraying him into what might prove the most serious trouble of his life. For, all the long way home, Mabel, who had recovered rapidly from her swoon, was ominously silent, or answered only in monosyllables; and he knew from her calm, stony face, as she entered the house, and went straight to her room, that she had seen a significance beneath the simple vesture of his story, that was known to no one but himself.

"—— those women," he muttered, "you cannot show

them a pebble, but they want to build a mountain out of it. With their intuitions, their inspirations, their fancies, their suspicions, one dare not even lift the corner of the veil that every man, from a sense of duty, should keep pegged down over his past life."

And then he went over in detail all that he could remember of his story and its suggestions. Suddenly a thought seemed to strike him with startling suddenness. He pulled back the sleeve of his dressing-gown and shirt, and looked long and anxiously at a mark high up on the arm, like the cicatrice of an ancient wound, except that instead of being long and narrow, it was a circular blotch, rimmed by a ridge of flesh and sunk down in a pale, flabby skin in the centre. Then he pulled open his shirt-front and stared at his breast in the glass. Yes! There were a few healed wounds, here and there.

"The marks of Paythan Triangular Knives, we shall say," he murmured. But his face wore a frown of anger and vexation. He dressed leisurely, turning over in his mind a hundred things which he might say to his wife, and debating earnestly with himself what would be the most politic course to pursue, — to make light of the whole thing, to laugh away her anger or her fears, to simulate anger, to fall back upon his usual cold, sneering manner, and then, if the lady persevered in her unpleasant mood, to hiss defiance at her; or — to make a clean breast of all and to commence anew. Alas! no, that cannot be even thought of. It would be sheer madness. The veil must be kept pegged down. All men do it. Society could not otherwise cohere. These little dissimulations are the cement of good society. If all men and women

were to lay bare their secrets to the world, what a cataclysm there would be! It would be just like a West Indian earthquake, when the terrified inhabitants rush out clothed in sheets and towels and counterpanes.

"I shall lie still till the earthquake comes," he said. "I cannot afford to appear in undress before anyone."

Like all men who amuse themselves by anticipations, he was a little pleased, and yet disappointed, to find that Mabel had not come down to breakfast. The Major was alone, sitting over in his arm-chair near the fire. He was now hardly able to move. His lower extremities had been turned into stone. He was reading a letter, apparently with great interest, and not without emotion.

"Here is a letter from Bob," he said, as Outram came over and held his hands to the fire. "You remember Bob?"

"Of course. Maxwell. What news?"

"Strange enough. This is what he says":

CAHERCON, APRIL 30, 18—.

DEAR MAJOR: Here is a letter as from the dead. I have had all the experience of a Robinson Crusoe, or Haroun al Raschid for the past seven or eight months; and am just now located as above as farm hand and general overseer or time-keeper over some marble quarries. Most likely you would not hear from me until my term of probation had expired; but I want you to do something for me, and without delay. You know Bernards — Colonel Bernards? He lives down near Killiney. His agent is Steevens, Maguire and Co. Well, I want him to sell me at once a farm, which is on his estate here, called Lisheen, lately occupied by a family named McAuliffe, whom he has evicted, and who are now lodged in Tralee gaol. The farm is practically worthless to him now, as you know; no one dare take it. And I shall give his own sum, provided he sends me promptly deed of sale, duly signed, etc. I will explain all after-

wards, when we meet. How is the old enemy? I hope he is sparing you. I know almost nothing of the outer world; and am afraid of asking questions. All can wait.

Yours truly,

ROBERT MAXWELL.

Address as above, and keep strictly private.

"Quixotism after Quixotism," said Outram. "Some Kerry colleen has bewitched him, or perhaps he is so enamoured of his Robinson Crusoe life he is going to abandon civilization for ever, and take up the farm at — what do you call the place?"

"And get himself shot," said the Major. "Lisheen, he calls it, half mountain, half bog, I suppose, like all Kerry."

"Well, well, wonders will never cease," said Outram, going over to the breakfast table and touching the gong.

"See is Mrs. Outram coming down to breakfast," he said to the footman.

"No, sir," was the answer. "Mrs. Outram's maid says that she will breakfast in her room."

"Very good. Tired after last evening," he said to the Major. "We had a most stupid dinner, and I was bored to death by a professor of something — a short, dumpy, Pickwickian little fellow, eyeglass, seals, corpulence, gaiters, — no, he was in evening dress — that was all the difference between himself and the immortal. The fellow wanted to prove," he continued, as he poured out his coffee, "that he, who was never outside Ireland, knew more than an Anglo-Indian, like myself, or you —"

"The — fool," said the Major, who was particularly sore on that point. "What did you say?"

"Say? Well, what can you say to a fool?" said

Outram. "His contention was that, that you can get more information out of books than by experience, — by reading about a thing than by seeing it."

"And what did you say?"

"I said all I could," said Outram. "I exhausted my knowledge and poured it through the sieve of the fellow's mind, and then I remembered a wise old saying: 'Answer a fool according to his folly.'"

"How was that?" asked the Major.

"I invented a story, or rather built up a legend upon a few facts, as novelists do, and poured it through his little brain, as he sipped his whisky and water. He swallowed it all, as easily as he swallowed his liquor. And he was so entranced that he induced me to tell the same story to the ladies in the drawing-room. I shouldn't be in the least surprised if they also believed it, and if it were over half the drawing-rooms in Dublin in a week."

"You must tell me that this evening after dinner," said the Major. "Or perhaps Mabel will tell me all about it at lunch."

"Yes, Mabel will tell it better than I. She quite understands that it was improvised for the occasion — a little fact, a lot of fiction like all romances."

"You're going to the city?" asked the Major.

"Ye-es," said Outram.

"Would you mind calling at Steeven's and Maguire's, and say I should like to see a representative of the firm to-day, if possible?"

"Yes, certainly. They are agents in one of those streets off Dame Street, I believe?"

"Yes, quite so. How do you know them?"

"Little business matters. I can send them a message, of course, in case I should not be able to call."

"Yes, But it is urgent. It is all about Bob's letter and his commission. And you see it must be done at once."

"Of course. I'll see to it. What is his address, by the way?"

"Cahercon, Co. Kerry."

"Very good. I hope Mabel will be able to come down early. Nothing else in town?"

"Nothing," replied the Major.

Mabel came down to lunch. She looked so pale, so woebegone, so distressed, that the Major was startled. She took her seat wearily at the table, but ate nothing. The Major looked at her with anxious eyes. He was not so entirely engrossed with his gout as to fail to see for some time past that his daughter was not happy. No complaint ever passed her lips, but she went about the house looking after her household duties, dressed, drove out in her carriage, dressed for balls and dinners, went to levees, but in such a mechanical and spiritless way, so dull, so cold, so unemotional, that her father saw clearly there was something wrong, but he forebore asking questions, for he dreaded revelations.

"She was naturally cold and reserved," he thought, "her mother's disposition, — but this new manner or disposition was something more."

But this afternoon her features were dragged and distorted as by some acute pain, and there was cut deeply upon them the sad sculpturing of sorrow and of woe.

She turned aside from the table, drew a chair opposite the fire, and with hands folded on her lap continued gazing in silence at the jets of flame that burst from the burning coal. The Major was too deeply impressed to say anything. He shifted uneasily in the arm-chair and was silent. Then he bethought him of Bob Maxwell's letter, and fumbling for it, he handed it to her. She merely glanced at the superscription and handed it back. Then she said:

"Father, could we — I mean, you and I — go away somewhere?"

"Go away?" echoed the Major. "Not now, Mabel, not in the height of the season when no one leaves town."

"Couldn't we sell out this place and furniture and go abroad — to Spain, to the Riviéra, to Algiers, anywhere?"

"What's the matter with you, Mab?" the Major said. "You're not well!"

She burst into passionate weeping, and kneeling on the hearthrug by her father's feet, she put her hand on his hand and moaned:

"Well? I'm too well, God help me! If only I were ill enough to die and be at rest!"

"Now, now, Mab," said her father. "This is nonsense, or what is worse, hysteria, and you know you must not give way to that. You're too young and too newly married to yield to such weakness."

"Ah, my God, if I had never married," she moaned piteously. "If only I had the sense to remain with you, and nurse you to old age and the end! Oh! what madness possesses girls that they do not know their happiness and must fling it away!"

And she wept bitterly.

"Come, now, Mab," said her father. "This won't do. What has come between you and Ralph? I know you're not happy together. But that often happens. By the way, what was the story he told last night at dinner? Come, tell it all to me. Ralph said you could tell it better than he."

"Did he tell you that, father?" she cried, with eyes flashing through her tears.

"He did. It was his last word this morning as he was going to the city. He said he concocted a story last night to please some old duffer of a professor. It was all fancy, or nearly so. But he says it will probably be all over gossipy Dublin before a week."

"What a liar! What a hypocrite!" she murmured. "It was his own history he told. Men must make a confession of their lives sometimes; and he was excited with drink. Did you suspect that he was ever addicted to drink, poor old Pap?"

"I did. God forgive me. I knew it," said the Major, with humble sorrow.

The two sat silent for a long time watching the flickering fire, and busy with their own thoughts.

"Ah! if you had only married Bob — poor Bob!" said the Major at length.

But she put her hand over his mouth and stopped him. Then after another pause she rose up and left the room. As she went upstairs to her room, wearily and with heavy steps, catching at the balustrade to help her, she paused for a moment beneath a lobby window of coloured glass. Here on a pedestal was the porphyry vase which had

been sent by an unknown hand from India with the Sanscrit letter which her husband refused to interpret. She had passed it a hundred times before without a thought, except the unconscious admiration of its perfect and polishd beauty. Now she stood still and studied it. The great broad cavity shone beneath the coloured glass of the window, here crimson, here blue and yellow. She thought she would give a good deal to know its history — who made it, whence it came. Then her husband's words about the little Hindoo girl came back to her and she remembered, with a kind of vague horror, that he said she never turned out any work of art from her hands, except with some symbol, or symbolic meaning, which sooner or later would be revealed. She argued then — this vase is a symbol — but of what? She couldn't think. But as she watched it, she thought she saw the coils of the green snake, knotted at the bottom of the vase, shiver and stir, and she shrank back in terror. It was pure imagination, of course. But she took up a heavy paper-weight that lay on the table, — a five-pound solid shell fixed in mahogany, which her father had brought home from India, — and poising it in her hand as in self-defence, she looked again. Whether her imagination, strung by sleeplessness and worry, was over-excited, or whether the lights that flickered and faded from the window deceived her, she thought she saw the hideous green reptile stirring again, and in a paroxysm of horror she brought down the heavy paper-weight with all her force upon the snake. The green stone crumbled as if it were glass, and the porphyry vase parted in two, as if cut by a knife. It did not fall to the ground, but remained on the pedes-

tal, the edges, clean-cut, now an inch apart, and she saw that the thickness of the beautiful vase graduated from three or four inches at the foot to an inch in the centre, and then widened out to greater thickness, where the edge of the vase lipped over.

Horrified at what she had done, she still felt a strange thrill of exultation, as if the breaking of that vessel symbolized some decisive turn of fate for her. "At least," she thought, "it means a change, a rupture of present relations, a new life, and that is a great gain."

She went to her room and sat down to think. Leaning her weary head on her hand, she looked out through the window where the dreary sun was shivering down the west amidst banks of gray, ashen clouds. She began to review her married life, — her first feelings of repulsion to her husband which broke on her ambitious schemes and made them seem a sacrilege, committed in what should be the home and sanctuary of pure, unselfish love; her surprise, growing rapidly to indignation, when she discovered, at first unwillingly, then with growing feelings of disgust, her husband's real character; her attempts at secrecy, keeping the lid firmly down on the terrible secrets of her wifehood, her forced dissimulations in society, her feeble efforts to maintain her dignity at home, the revelation that she had made the one great blunder of a woman's existence, irreparable, except by the merciful finger of Death — all came up, to weigh her to the earth in remorse and sorrow. The cold setting sun peeped into no more dismal scene than the boudoir of that beautiful girl.

The sun went down. The twilight fell. Then the

night. The shadows darkened round her and wrapped her up in their gloom. But she sat motionless, staring into the night, until she heard the footstep on the stair that she knew to be her husband's; and she felt that the great crisis in her life was at hand.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FATHER COSGROVE'S DILEMMA

THERE was one very troubled soul in and around Lisheen during these critical days. Father Cosgrove was one of those strange spirits who could bear with the most perfect equanimity his own troubles, but was weighed to the ground with the thought of the sufferings of others. Humiliations he had patiently borne, poverty was his chosen lot in life, time could have no fate in store for him which he dreaded, and therefore, so far as himself was concerned, he had neither anxiety, apprehension, or remorse. But, like a true priest, he bore the infirmities of others and carried their sorrows.

The eviction at Lisheen was a sore trial to the heart of this tender priest. He had heard nothing about it until the following day. And then he and his pastor did all in their power to alleviate the misery of this little unhappy portion of their flock. But this was not his chief trouble. Strange to say, he was more deeply concerned about Brandon Hall than Lisheen, more apprehensive of the future that lay before Hugh Hamberton than that which seemed already to have created itself for Owen McAuliffe and his family.

He had conceived a strange liking for Hamberton. Beneath all the cynicism of the latter he had discerned indications of a certain nobility of character which he

knew to be rare amongst men. When men rage against their kind it is generally from disappointed hopes, or cruel disillusion. The man that can be patient with humanity is a saint, as we have already said, or one who has accepted its baseness as a part of the finite condition of things. Hamberton's verdict on his race was: "You are wholly and altogether beneath contempt; but, such as you are, as I have not the discredit of your creation, I must make the best I can even of you. And then," he might have added, and this was the one thought that was perpetually harassing the mind of his friend, Father Cosgrove, "I shall part company with you as swiftly as I may. I cannot meet worse whithersoever I go."

Now, there was but one tie, one condition that seemed to bind him to earth, and so far as Father Cosgrove could see, that condition would soon end. For he seemed to understand the moment that Maxwell and Claire Moulton met, that they were destined for each other. It was not foresight, nor calculation, nor worldly wisdom, but some intuition, belonging to such delicate and detached souls, that created the presentiment that in this obscure tramp was to be found the chief actor in the future destinies of Brandon Hall. And when a little later on he found that by a singular chain of circumstances Maxwell was absolutely established in a position of confidence under Hamberton, nay, was a respected visitor at the Hall, and had been seen with Miss Moulton on her round of visits, on the sea-beach, or out at sea, he became quite distressed, and with the worldly imprudence that characterizes such minds, he thought it time to interfere. He had not the slightest prejudice against Maxwell, he even liked him,

but Maxwell had become to his imagination the evil genius of the family, and he felt it his duty to fight against what he knew to be inexorable Fate.

"I want to say something very particular — very particular to you," he said one day to Hamberton, closing the remark with that curious gesture he had of waving one hand in the air.

"By all means," said Hamberton.

"It's a private matter — rather a family affair," said the priest, nervously.

"Never mind. Go ahead," said Hamberton, who already guessed what was in the good priest's mind.

"I think — I am almost sure — I ought to tell you — there is a growing intimacy between Miss Moulton and your new steward, and you know it is always well to stop these things in the beginning."

"Quite right. That is, if they ought to be stopped at all."

"But," said the old priest, anxiously, "you do not contemplate the possibility of marriage between Maxwell and your ward?"

"Why not?" said Hamberton.

"Of course, of course, of course, why not, why not?" said the old man. "But you know nothing about him."

"No. Certainly not. So much the better," said the cynical Hamberton. "If I did I should probably have never brought him here, or dismissed him summarily. It is only the men you don't know whom you can trust."

"I don't understand," said the old priest. "I'm very stupid. I shouldn't have spoken — I shouldn't have spoken."

"Not the slightest harm done, my dear friend," said Hamberton, gaily. "What I meant was, that I have never met a man yet (except yourself) who improved on acquaintance. It is the unknown I trust, because in the case of the unknown you can say, This fellow *may be* a scoundrel; in the case of those who are known to you you say, This fellow *is* a scoundrel. Now, I let things go on between my ward and Maxwell, because I haven't yet found him a rascal. I probably shall, and then —"

"And then it will be too late—too late!" said the priest.

"Not at all," said Hamberton. "Claire will make the discovery simultaneously, and we shall cashier him."

The old man shook his head.

"That is not my experience of such things," he said. "Nay, the greater the — the — offender, the more will a girl cling to him."

"Claire is made of other metal," said Hamberton. "But make your mind easy, my dear friend. I know Claire well. She will only marry a hero—someone who at least has shown himself made of truer metal than passes in ordinary currency. She won't marry a *divorcé*, but she won't marry a man who cannot divorce himself from himself."

"I don't understand," said the old priest. "I am quite stupid about these things. I shouldn't have interfered. I meant well."

"I know you did," said the gruff man of the world, almost with affection. "You don't want to see any master in Brandon Hall, except its present owner."

"Not as long as I live," said the priest, courteously and humbly. "When I die, well then — well then —" and he waved his hand in the air.

"Then I suppose you will become my Daimon — my Guardian-Angel," said Hamberton. "You will watch me night and day, and yet I shall elude your vigilance. And why? Because I have a right to go out of the world, even if I were not consulted about coming into it. When I am tired, I shall lie down like a sick child to rest, as some poet has it. I shall sleep on the bosom of Mother Earth, and, for the first time, know what is meant by *pax et tranquillitas magna!*"

"You will not know peace," said the priest, "for you cannot go out of life alone, and there is an Avenger beyond the grave."

"Cannot go out of life alone?" echoed Hamberton. "Oh! but I shall. And as for the rest, doesn't your great poet put Cato in Purgatory?"

"I don't know! I don't know!" said the priest. "I should not discuss these things. But the good God will guide you, and prevent you. You shall see his hand when he chooses to reveal it."

"Well, well, say no more," said Hamberton. "But make your mind at rest about Claire. Hers is a strong nature; she cannot be led, or deceived."

Although Hamberton threw lightly aside the forebodings of Father Cosgrove, he was nevertheless very much disquieted by what he had heard. He lived only for this young girl, and his one ambition in life was to see her married to some one to whom she could look up with love and veneration. He was too much of a cynic to believe that such sanguine anticipations could be realized — least of all in that remote corner amongst rude peasants and fishermen. But, like all unbelievers, there was a strong

tinge of superstition in his character. He was a firm believer in the existence of those mysterious currents of being that rush together from remotest poles, and seem to converge without any guidance but that of Fate. And when this young fellow, Maxwell, came within his ken, shrouded in mystery, his character but half revealed and yet showing signs of gentle birth and breeding, and when he saw that there was a certain attraction there for his ward, whose feelings had been hitherto undisturbed by contact with the world of men, he began to think that he was watching the prologue to some drama, which might eventuate in circumstances more tragic than agreeable.

He became suddenly aware, as he walked, with head stooped and slow steps, down towards the beach, of the presence of a stranger. Hamberton disliked strangers. He had a decided objection to forming new acquaintances. Fresh faces, fresh trouble, he thought. The stranger accosted him.

"Mr. Hamberton, I presume?"

"Yes," said Hamberton, brusquely. "What may be your business?"

"It is very brief," said the stranger. "You have a man in your employment named Maxwell?"

"Yes," said Hamberton. "What of him?"

"I should like to know his history," said the stranger. "Where he comes from, and his antecedents?"

"Then why the devil don't you ask himself?" said Hamberton, nettled at the sudden possibilities that seemed to loom up before him.

"I am a police officer," said the man. "I thought to

avoid all unpleasantness by asking you to clear up one or two things."

"You're on Maxwell's track, then?" said Hamberton, without apology. "In a word, he's *wanted?*"

"Not quite that," said the officer. "But our suspicions have been aroused in a singular manner, and we want to know something about him. If you can give me the desired information we need proceed no further and we shall spare him some pain."

Hamberton paused for a moment. Then he said:

"Come along here and we can talk as we proceed. What now do you want to know."

"First," said the officer, "where this man comes from, his former occupation, and the reason he has adopted this mode of life."

"He came here from Lisheen," said Hamberton. "He was labourer there with a family named McAuliffe. He has come here at my invitation to act as steward or overseer on my works."

"We are quite aware of all that," said the officer. "But his life previous to his coming to Lisheen?"

"Of that I know absolutely nothing," said Hamberton. "You must question himself."

And he turned away.

As if on second thoughts, however, he followed the officer, and said:

"What do you seek Maxwell for? Is he suspected of crime?"

"I'm not at liberty to say," answered the officer. "It is possible that it may be serious, or that we may make a grave mistake."

"Very possible, indeed," said Hamberton, turning away.

Nevertheless he was grievously troubled. It was becoming pretty clear that his ward was not altogether insensible to the strange attraction that hung around his steward, for though the latter never put himself forward, nor sought his own society, nor that of Miss Moulton, this very restraint argued in his favour. It was that reticence of conduct that belongs to superior souls. Hamberton recognised it, and was himself drawn towards Maxwell, with whom he would have been even more cordial, but for that cynical distrust with which he regarded all men. He thought it his duty, however, under these circumstances to speak to his ward.

"Our friend, Maxwell," he said to her in the afternoon of the day on which he was questioned by the police officer, "is a puzzle, a mystery, and strange to say, our further acquaintance with him seems to throw no light upon his previous history."

She flushed at once, and he did not fail to notice it.

"Most men," he went on, "become communicative as you grow acquainted with them and give them your confidence, but Maxwell seems to gather himself more and more closely within the involutions of his cell."

"Perhaps, like the needy knife-grinder, he has no story to tell," said Claire.

"Well, at least we might know whence he came, and what he was before he settled down at Lisheen. I think we agree that he is not peasant-born or bred."

"That is quite manifest," said his ward. "But I hardly think we would be justified in probing too closely

into his former life. He was employed out of sheer benevolence by you, uncle, and if we made no condition then we should make none now."

"True, little woman," he said. "But, Claire dearest, take care! Take care! The very mystery surrounding these men is sometimes attractive."

"Never fear, uncle," she replied. "I shall keep watch and ward over the enemy."

"You believe in Maxwell then?" he said. "I shall not use a stronger word."

"Yes," she said firmly. "At least I believe he is a strictly honourable man!"

"How then do you account for his strange interference against these poor people at Lisheen the day of their eviction? I could have kept them in their little home but for him."

"Yes. But you believed then, when he spoke to you and the sheriff, that he had no ill motive, and that he would make all right."

"I did. I don't understand it; but I believed then, and I believe now, that he meant well."

"So do I."

"Father Cosgrove doesn't like him."

"Priests never understand the sheep of another flock."

"Perhaps so. But, Claire."

"Yes."

"Be prepared for a surprise. By the way, when do these Shakespearian recitations come off?"

"On Thursday evening."

"And your parts?"

"Lady Macbeth and Desdemona."

"And Maxwell is Macbeth and Othello, I suppose?"

"Yes. That's the programme."

"Not a good one by any means," said Hamberton, relaxing into his old bitter cynicism and forgetting his momentary anxiety about Maxwell. "A thoroughly bad selection, I should say. Othello was an impossible fool, and Desdemona an impossible ninny. No woman in the world would have allowed herself to be murdered in that lamb-like way without even an effort to save herself. Iago — true to nature, human nature at its worst, almost. But why didn't you select Shakespeare's two greatest plays — Lear and Timon? There he held the mirror up to nature indeed. Mark you, of Lear's three daughters, two were devils. Quite correct. In his dethronement and madness the mighty king had but two followers — a madman and a fool. Right again. And Timon! Magnificent Timon! 'Old Timon with the noble heart, that strongly loathing, greatly broke!' Strongly loathing! Not half enough. No utter hatred, dislike, contempt, loathing could be half strong enough for these base and vile sycophants that battened on him in his prosperity and abandoned him when he fell — fell through his own d—d benevolence. He should have poisoned these wretches at his banquet, and then stood calmly over them, and watched their agonizing deaths. Hot water in their plates? No, that was weak, William, with your permission. Diluted strychnine, or cyanide of potassium, would have been better. But that 'Uncover, dogs, and lap!' is the noblest half-line in all human literature. Couldn't we have it, Claire? Could Maxwell do it?

There is no part for ladies in Timon, but could Maxwell do that, do you think?"

"'Tis too late now, uncle," she said. "Some other time."

"Yes, if there shall be another time."

He stopped and paced up and down his library, musing. Then he suddenly said:

"*N'importe!* If the fellow is a scoundrel, let him have his deserts. Let every miscreant have his halter, say I, or what else is the devil for? But Claire, Claire," he said, coming over and stroking her hair tenderly," take care, won't you? I cannot have you thrown away, little woman. Watch over the citadel, won't you? Woman's heart is such a traitor."

"Never fear for me, uncle," she said gaily. "I do not care so much for Maxwell but that I could cut out his image if he proves unworthy."

"Well and bravely said," cried Hamberton. "Every woman should have that fortitude, and half the evils of life would be spared. And, if all comes right, if Maxwell is, as you believe, and I think, a good fellow, what then?"

"Well then," said Claire, "I shall send him to you."

Hamberton laughed. And then muttering:

"This is too sudden! Ask papa!" he turned away. He had jested gaily, but his heart was heavy.

CHAPTER XXIX

SHAKESPEARIAN RECITALS

If Father Cosgrove was grievously troubled these days about the fate which hung over Brandon Hall, and the strangers who had become so dear to him, the mysterious agent, as he deemed it, of that Fate was no less grievously tormented.

Maxwell had heard from the old Major, in reply to his letter about Lisheen. The business details were easily settled. Colonel Bernards was only too glad to get such a troublesome place off his hands, and he sold his entire and unencumbered interest in it to Maxwell for three hundred pounds. But here arose the difficulty. How now could he carry out his hidden design not only to restore these poor people to their home, but to make that home a wonder and a surprise to them and their neighbours for ever? He had become deeply attached to them, and many a night he remained awake, planning a new farm-house, new furniture, new barns, fences perfect, gates of the most modern pattern, etc. He frequently pictured to himself (and found intense pleasure in the fancy) the wonder, the delight of these poor people, when on emerging from prison, and expecting only to see a ruined house and a desolate farm before them, they would find themselves reinstated in a place that would be absolutely luxurious by comparison. But how could he do it?

He dared not show himself at Lisheen. The story of his supposed treachery to the McAuliffes had gone far and wide, and he would risk his life if he were seen about the place. He could have written to his agent, but he didn't care just yet to reveal his position, except where his secret could be kept. He thought of consulting Hamberton, but he shrank as yet from the revelation. And, let it be said, he wished to win Claire Moulton for his wife without the adventitious help that would arise from a knowledge of his real position. Yet, time was rushing by. In three months the McAuliffes would be released from prison, and then — his beautiful castle would topple over and fall.

The good old Major, too, had hinted rather brusquely that Mabel was not happy. Even his old, blind eyes had seen it. And he said little things, expressed little regrets, with here and there an "Alas!" and an "If," that signified much. Was Maxwell sorry and sympathetic? Hardly. For human pride is flattered when those who have spurned us have had reason to regret what they have done. Sometimes he would feel a little savage against the Major, against Mabel, but most of all against Outram, whom he had always disliked.

"The cad," he would mutter between his teeth, "I knew he would break her heart. Poor Mab! Queen Mab!"

He was in one of these moods when he received a letter from Outram demanding back the talisman — the ring with the strange intaglio, which was to be the pledge, and in some wise the guerdon, of Maxwell's banishment. Outram contended that as Maxwell had not kept his

engagement to live as a farm labourer for twelve months, he should now resign the talisman and confess himself defeated in his Quixotic scheme. To this Maxwell sent the following reply:

CAHERCON, April 30, 18—.

DEAR OUTRAM: I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter. I thought that Major Willoughby would have kept my present position and *incognito* secret, particularly from you. But quite possibly, the many troubles, domestic and others, that are now pressing on the Major's mind, and disturbing his peace, may have rendered him forgetful for the moment of the prudence that should have guarded my secret, especially from you. You are quite mistaken in supposing that I have not kept my engagement. I have had some grievous hardships, but I have received much illumination also; and I consider myself much a better man than when last I sat in your company in a Dublin club. I am still employed here as overseer and time-keeper, but also as farm-servant and labourer. I have served six months in much the same capacity, but under lower and more menial conditions. I have suffered much, but made no mistake; and shall continue my probation for a better life until the term agreed upon has expired. And until then, I shall retain the bauble you were good enough to lend me. The Gods will protect you.

Yours truly,
ROBERT MAXWELL.

A letter which made Ralph Outram very uneasy. Cold and brutal and unfeeling, he felt the web of Fate closing around him; and with the intense superstitions that haunt such minds, he placed a hope in that little ring and its intaglio.

The night for the Shakespearian recitals came round rapidly. Maxwell had drilled some young village lads to

take subordinate parts in the entertainment, but he reserved the main characters for Claire Moulton and himself. There were many rehearsals, held in the loft over the marble stores, but now transformed into a theatre with lights, and an improvised stage, drop curtains, side scenes and all. The more Claire Moulton saw of him during these rehearsals, although she studied him closely under the light of a dark suspicion, the more she became convinced that, whatever was his history, two things were clear — he was of gentle birth and had had a liberal education, and he was not only an honourable man, but had a peculiar tenderness in his character which marked him as one of Nature's nobility. For if the hall-mark of nobility in the eyes of the noble is unemotional serenity, the hall-mark of nobility of Nature is gentleness and tenderness towards all, even the most humble. Yet she thought sometimes — it is suffering that has made him thus; but this rather increased than diminished her interest in him, now rapidly growing into something more deep and tender.

There was a crowded house, for the people gathered in from all quarters to see the novelty. It would be difficult to conjecture what they expected, but it is to be feared that if they thought the programme was intended to be purely educational, they would not have been too eager to come. "Fun and frolic," "Panem et circenses," are still our cry. But nothing was more foreign to Maxwell's intentions. He had a mission of elevation, of pushing up these gifted people, who were, alas, unconscious of their gifts, to higher levels; and he knew no other way of effecting this than by submitting to them the masterpieces of the world's literary master.

He was delighted beyond measure at his success. The long hall looked well in the lamplight. The rude, bare rafters were wrapped in festoons of ivy and long tendrils of woodbine, just then breaking into leaf. The stage was rude, and the benches were rude, but the former was covered with plants and flowers, the latter were filled with an eager and, as events proved, a most appreciative and intelligent audience. Hamberton sat in the front bench, more moody than cynical, for he knew that behind the mock tragedy on the stage there was a more real and terrible tragedy impending.

The proceedings commenced with the singing of one or two of Shakespeare's lyrics, and then came the murder scene in Macbeth. The two leading characters were so disguised that the simple peasantry failed to recognise them, and this made the awful scene more impressive. It would have flattered Claire Moulton exceedingly, at least in her dramatic rôle, could she have heard the comments that were made by this impressionable and emotional audience upon her impersonation of Lady Macbeth. It was simply marvellous how they caught up the thread of the story — the weakness and vacillation of Macbeth, the more than masculine determination of his wife, his despair:

"She's the divil out an' out," whispered one.

"She'd do it herself, only she thought she saw her father," said another.

"Wondher that same shtopped her," said a third. But there was universal contempt for Macbeth. A murderer was bad enough, but a weak murderer, and one who would place the guilt on innocent men, was beyond all human forgiveness.

In the last scene of the second part of the programme, the murder of Desdemona, rustic feelings ran very high. The callousness of Othello, and his short, brutal answers to Desdemona's plaintive and piteous appeals for mercy, seemed to wind the people up to a pitch of desperation. Their contempt for the "nigger," their pity for his beautiful wife, and the excellent acting of both, infuriated the people, until they quite lost themselves, forgot it was a drama, and thought they were face to face with a real tragedy. The women were moaning and crying, the children were yelling with fright, and, at the moment when the Moor went over and placed the fatal pillow on the lips of the unhappy woman, there was a general rising of the men, which would have issued badly for Othello had not Hamberton risen and with one motion of his hand quelled the emotions of the people. They sat down quivering with excitement, which was only stilled when Othello drove the dagger into his own breast. This appeared to relieve their feelings.

"Bad ind to the ruffian. Sure it was only what he desarved."

"Where's the good of his sorra? They're always sorry whin it can't be remedied."

"Yerra, shure 'twas only play actin' they wor."

"Yerra, av coorse, didn't ye hear the Masther say so?"

"Begor thin,' 'twas quare play acthin'. Didn't ye see him smother the poor girl? An' drive the soord into his own stumac?"

"Yerra, sure they say 'twas Miss Claire, and that she isn't dead at all."

"Miss Claire? Be this an' that, av I thought 'twas

Miss Claire, I'd have settled that chap before he sot a wet finger upon her."

The realism, indeed, was but too perfect, and Maxwell became the butt of that truculent amusement with which crowds often pursue a victim who has merely assumed a part. If you wear a lion's skin you must expect a lion's measure of fear or reprobation. And in Ireland, where a witty judge has said, everything is *Opera Bouffe*, a man must suffer for whatever part he assumes in the curious melodrama.

And so Othello, in his white tunic and red tasselled girdle, was pursued by a hooting crowd to his own door, when the recitals were over.

"Ss — ss — ss — sh — sh — sh! Look at him, the dirty nigger, who smothered his wife! Begor, what a beauty you wor that she should take a fancy to you! 'Twas jealousy, my dear! Sure he thought no wan as handsome as himself! He'll want another now to settle her agin! Bah! Bah! Ss — ss — ss — ss!"

More or less terrified and disgusted, and yet half pleased with the unconscious flattery of the mob, he murmured to himself:

"Clearly, the work of educating these people is no child's play."

He was hot and fatigued from his exertions and was slowly washing off the burnt cork that disguised him, when Mrs. Donegan, who was his maid-of-all-work, came in and said:

"There are two gentlemen waiting to see you outside."

"Let them wait," he said impatiently.

But they didn't. They came in, without fuss or excitement, and the foremost said:

"Your name is Maxwell? Robert Maxwell?"

"Yes," said Maxwell, brusquely. "What do you want?"

"I've come to arrest you," said the man, "on a charge, or rather a suspicion, of being concerned in the murder of a girl."

The thought of Desdemona and the part he had just taken towards her was so uppermost in Maxwell's mind that he was quite sure the officer referred to her, and he said angrily:

"You d—d fool, don't you know that it was but a Shakespearian dialogue. It's bad enough to be hooted by that ignorant mob outside, but you should know better."

"It has nothing to do with that," said the officer. "The charge is a more serious one, I regret to say. Come with us."

"Allow me," said Maxwell, seeing that the thing looked serious. "There is some stupid and abominable mistake. You say I'm charged with murder, or complicity in murder. Where, and when?"

"I'd advise you," said the officer, "for your own sake to say no more. This is my warrant, if you care to see it, We've been looking for you for some time."

"I tell you there is some infernal mistake somewhere," said Maxwell. "I never had anything to do with violence except on the stage. Or is this all a practical joke?"

"Come, come," said the officer. "We can't delay. We have a car waiting. If you use any violence or show resistance, I shall have to handcuff you."

Utterly dazed and bewildered at the sudden turn in his affairs, yet perfectly conscious of his innocence, Maxwell swiftly made his toilet, and called in Mrs. Donegan, bidding her see after his affairs during a short absence. Then, turning to the officers, he said, coldly, but politely:

"You are making a serious mistake for which I shall make you pay. But I cannot resist you. Please take me before Mr. Hamberton. I *must* see him."

Hamberton was in his dining-room at supper when the visitors were announced. Claire Moulton, still habited as Desdemona, was with him. They were talking over the events of the evening, and laughing at the unconscious flattery of the people towards Maxwell, when the latter entered, accompanied by the officers.

"You must forgive this unwarrantable intrusion, Mr. Hamberton," he said, in a voice somewhat unsteady from emotion, "but our stage fictions have had a curious ending. These gentlemen charge me with actual murder."

Hamberton was silent, looking down at the table, and toying with his knife. Maxwell gulped down something and went on:

"I have not the faintest idea to what they refer, and they refuse to give any information. They seem to think they are conceding a high privilege in not having handcuffed me. There is some stupid mistake somewhere, but at least it has one good result. It solves a difficulty for me, and compels me to make a revelation to you, which otherwise I should have no excuse for doing."

Hamberton was still silent, but manifested more interest here. Claire Moulton was devouring Maxwell with her

eyes. The latter went on, simply and quietly, as if he were telling some one else's story:

"My name is Maxwell, Robert Maxwell. I am the landlord of this district, and therefore your landlord."

Hamberton now stood up. Claire Moulton looked at him meaningly, and a smile of pleasure and triumph stole over her features.

"I am a Trinity man," Maxwell continued, "an M. A. of Trinity, and I have read long and deeply. That's why I am here. I could have done like all my college associates and compeers, — killed so many foxes, shot so many brace of partridge or pheasants, evicted so many tenants, and remained an honoured and respected member of the aristocracy, but I read and read and understood that life has finer issues than these, and that I was called to a more arduous and lofty mission. I read somewhere that sooner or later every spirit is tested, and an alternative placed before it, to ascend the summit of being, and find in its cold, clear atmosphere its rightful place, or to remain deep down in the valleys of Paphos, and pursue an easy, voluptuous existence, sanctioned by the usages of society, but condemned by my own conscience. I made up my mind. I was the owner of broad acres, and I held the lives and happiness of many toilers and workers in my hands —"

"Pardon, one moment," said Hamberton. Then, turning to the officers of the law, he said:

"You see you have made a grim mistake, my men. Perhaps, however, you would wait outside, until I clear the matter up."

"If you can guarantee, sir, — I fear there is a mistake,

and that this is the 'mad landlord' some of us have been questing for. But we must do our duty."

"All right! That's all right," said Hamberton, impatiently. "But I promise you he won't escape through the window. Don't you see he's a gentleman?"

And the officers went out.

"Go on, Mr. Maxwell," said Hamberton. "This grows interesting."

"I was saying," said Maxwell, flushed and excited, "that I held the lives and happiness of many poor earth-diggers and spade-slaves in my hands, and I could, if I had chosen, unrebuked by the customs of the age and society, have extracted their sweat, and coined it for my own selfish use. But, as I tell you, I had read wisely or unwisely; and I felt I had duties towards these serfs, as well as rights over their wretched labour. I felt that someone was called to raise up this wretched and teeming population above chronic conditions of starvation and ignorance, and I knew this could not be done from outside. They would suspect the motive of the benefaction, and they would have reason to suspect it, and my toil would be in vain. I determined to go down amongst them, to become one of themselves. The idea was floating for a long time before my mind, but only took shape when I was taunted about it in a Dublin club. I took fire. I was challenged to do what everyone deemed impracticable, and even insane. There was one man especially there, a returned Indian, who was conspicuously contemptuous. I had reason to dislike him and suspect him. He continued to taunt me. He wore a ring — an intaglio, to which he attached superstitious importance. I suddenly

conceived an idea. I made a promise to go down and become a day-labourer amongst the peasantry, and to live their lives for twelve months, but I demanded that ring in return. He would have refused, but he was shamed into it. This is the ring."

He handed it carelessly to Hamberton, who examined it closely, and passed it on to Claire, who studied it also, and then unconsciously retained it.

"It is not much," said Hamberton. "One of those talismans which Arabian Mussulmen wear. It is phosphorescent, is it not?"

"Yes," said Maxwell. "Well, at last, he consented, and I took up my strange rôle and came down here to Lisheen. I had tried several farmers for employment, but met refusals everywhere. I was too genteel a tramp, I suppose. At last, footsore and weary and hungry and in despair, I came to Lisheen. The poor old woman was alone in her kitchen when I entered and made the usual appeal of a beggar. She took me in, gave me food and lodging and such sympathy as a poor, starved tramp alone can appreciate. Her husband came in, her son, her daughter. It was all alike. I asked for work, and got it. Need I say, it was nominal on my part. My limbs ached under a pressure that was merely pleasant to these athletes of Nature. Yet I was not dismissed. They treated me as one of themselves, only that they worked and I was idle. At last, I made up my mind to depart, and had actually gone, when they forced me back. The young girl, Debbie, came after me and ordered me back. It was well for me. That night I was down with rheumatic fever, and was ill for three weeks, during which

they nursed me with infinite solicitude and care. Was I grateful? God knows I was. The time has come for proving my gratitude now. You know all. How they struggled against an impossible rent, how Netterville took his revenge —"

"I understand all," said Hamberton. "But I cannot make out why you prevented a settlement with the sheriff that day. You know they resented it and the whole country-side with them."

"I do," said Maxwell, smiling. "But I wanted them to touch the very bedrock of trouble, in order to build on it more permanently, and I wanted to show another example to the world of what an Irish agent can do. And now you have to help me. This unfortunate arrest, or rather ridiculous and stupid blunder, has precipitated matters. So much the better. Here are the title-deeds — the fee-simple of that farm at Lisheen, which I have purchased from the landlord and made over to the McAuliffes for ever. I want you, knowing your benevolence, to arrange for me, whilst I am away, to have that farm-house rebuilt on the newest and most modern plans of comfort, retaining all its old homely features. I want the byres to have seven cows feeding in them when these poor people come out of prison. I want to have ten sheep on the fields. I want all the fences repaired, new gates hung up, the land tilled and sown. You can get the Land League to do it. They'll do anything for you. They'd shoot me. In a word, I want everything done for them that can be done, down to the pot on the fire, and the hens in the coop, and the pig in her stye, and I rely on you to do it. Need I say I shall bear the expense?"

He stopped. Claire Moulton, though in tears, looked smilingly at her guardian.

"'Tis a strange, weird story," said Hamberton, walking up and down the room. "One of the things that would be impossible out of Ireland, and impossible in Ireland, I would say, if I had not seen it. But my dear fellow, when you have conquered these kingdoms, what do you propose to do?"

"To sell my property, liberate my slaves, and settle down here to work for humanity with you."

"Tut, tut, nonsense," said Hamberton. "You could never settle down here alone."

"Not quite alone, uncle," said Claire Moulton, coming over and standing near Maxwell. Her eyes were red from weeping at the singular tale she had heard, and which Maxwell had already partly revealed to her. "With your consent, I have promised Mr. Maxwell to be his wife."

"Hallo! is that the way the land lies?" said Hamberton. "Is that how you have kept your promise to me?"

"I didn't break it, uncle," she said, "until I knew all."

"Of course, of course," said Hamberton. "The old story, the old story. But I must clear up one thing. Hallo, there!" he cried to the officers.

They came in.

"Your prisoner is now ready, and perhaps this young lady may accompany him. But, sergeant, look here. There must have been depositions before a warrant could be issued. On whose depositions have you made the frightful blunder of arresting this gentleman who owns half Kerry?"

"The young girl's who was arrested at Lisheen at the eviction," said the officer.

"Debbie McAuliffe?" said Maxwell in amazement.

"That's her name, I think, sir."

"But what could have put such an idea in the girl's head?" reflected Maxwell. "I suppose she was angry about the eviction."

"I suppose so," said Hamberton, looking at Claire. "But her revenge was rather tragic. And how could she have conceived the idea of murder?"

"I don't know," said Maxwell. "They all took me for an army deserter, except this girl, who from the first maintained a different opinion. However, I had better go on and clear matters up. There's something gained, for they say every decent man in Ireland must go to gaol some time or another. *Au revoir!*" He held out his hand to Hamberton. "You undertake to do all I require about Lisheen?"

"Ye-es," said Hamberton. "I think it Quixotic, but everything you have done hitherto is so. You only want the pot for a helmet and your equipment is complete."

"Well, I have found my Dulcinea," said Maxwell, laughing.

"And Claire has found her hero," said Hamberton. "But what will Father Cosgrove say, I wonder."

CHAPTER XXX

A LEPER

WHEN Outram tapped at his wife's door and uninvited entered, he found the room in complete darkness. He could not distinguish Mabel's figure, and said hesitatingly:

"Mabel, are you here?"

"Yes," she said firmly. "I am here. What do you seek?"

"Let me ring for a light. There's something wrong. What is it?"

"You have come into my room," she said, "unasked. You have something to say, or seek. Better say it in the darkness than in the light. What is it?"

"Mabel," he said, "there's something evidently wrong. This is unusual. Are you coming down to dinner? Or, look here —" he said, as if suddenly struck by a new idea, "will you let me send for Dr. Bellingham? Clearly, you are not well.

He had come over, guided by her voice and by the faint gleam of pallor from her face, and stood over her, as she sat by the window.

"Again, I repeat," she said, "you have come here unsolicited. Furthermore, you are acting a part, and acting it badly. You have something to say; say it. If you have naught to say, leave me."

He still kept a firm hold on his rising temper, though he felt his hands trembling.

"For God's sake, Mab," he said, "let nothing come between us now. We are too recently yoked to quarrel. There will be misunderstandings, I suppose, for ever, between married people, but as a rule, they are easily cleared up. Now, it is clear, we both have tempers. We can't help that. But, for God's sake, let us give and take. We have to consult for each other's happiness, or at least, peace. And there's the old man, your father, to consider. I know he doesn't like this kind of thing, and he's troubled —"

"Yes," she said, "he is troubled, and why?"

"Why? Because you are giving way to nerves, or temper, or something feminine, which we men don't understand."

"He understands," she said, "too much, but not all."

"What then does he understand?" said Outram. "Come, let us have explanations. There's nothing like clearing the air."

"He understands," said Mabel, slowly, but with terrible distinctness, "that he and I have made the blunder of our lives. He understands that I have paid, for my partial disobedience to his wishes, a fearful penalty. He understands that on the day, I, in my girlish folly and ambition, promised to be your wife, it would have been better if he had seen me dead. He understands that partly for him, altogether for me, there is no more peace or happiness any more for ever."

"Not very complimentary," said Outram, "but at least you will be pleased to remember that I did not force

myself on you in any undue or unbecoming manner. You are not pleased with me — I, at least, conjecture that to be your meaning — but you married position, and power, and a certain place in society. You still retain them, and you have no reason to complain."

The words were cutting because they were so terribly true. Mabel dared not deny them. He was encouraged.

"You could have married," he went on, "that idiotic cousin of yours, and been now a dairy-maid in Kerry, instead of being one of the recognised queens of such society as we have here, but you chose better. Why do you complain?"

"Because I didn't know," she said with contrition, "the penalty of such pride, the terrible conditions attaching to it."

"You mean my personality?"

She hesitated to say the offensive word. But he persisted.

"It is I who am the horror. Is it not?"

She muttered a feeble yes.

"Of course," he said bitterly, "I am not the Adonis you imagined. The Lord didn't make me a Count d'Orsay, a padded creature of stays and corsets to catch the eye of a silly girl. But you have all you anticipated otherwise. Surely, you didn't expect love in the bargain?"

She was silent. He knew his advantage, and went on mercilessly:

"You bartered your happiness deliberately for other things," he said. "But you did no more than every other woman in society. People may read novels, but even the most silly of school-misses doesn't believe in

them. Their good mammas take care of that. Girls marry in these unpoetical and prosaic days for money, position, a place in society, and they are prepared to take with such things their disadvantages. For Nature is impartial, *ma chérie.* Where she gives beauty, she balances it with idiocy, where she gives intelligence, she retrieves the gift with ugliness or moral malformation. Your Adonis is always a fool. Now, most women believe and understand this, and are content with a few of the gifts of fortune. You want all."

"I wanted at least as much as I gave," she said. "When a girl gives up everything she expects some return."

"Well said, my dear," he cried with a tone of triumph. "Now, we are beginning to understand. You see there is nothing like an academic argument, like this, to throw light on matters, although this seems slightly out of place in such Cimmerian gloom. Now, let us pursue this train of thought, which you have so admirably started. You looked on our marriage as a bargain, as a contract, where there should be a fair interchange of goods. Neither of us pretended then, or pretends now, to any sentimentality on the matter. Now, it does not reflect credit on my business tact or talent to have to admit that I think you have had decidedly the best of the bargain. You married for position, ease, social rank, etc., etc., I married that I might have a handsome woman, whom I could call my wife, and who would be known in society as Mrs. Ralph Outram. I obtained that desire. Mrs. Ralph Outram *is* the queen of fashion, the cynosure of all eyes in the drawing-room, at the theatre, at the ball; and I am rewarded when I hear one eye-glassed idiot say after

another: 'What a demd handsome woman! Who is she?' And the reply is: 'Mrs. Ralph Outram — Outram, you know, who is aide-de-camp, etc.' It is a poor compensation, I admit, but *que voulez-vous?* I say to myself. You couldn't have done better. But, my dear Mabel, don't you see the balance is on your side? Position, wealth, social rank, admiration, envy on your side; and, on mine, the poor compensation of being ranked as Mrs. Outram's husband. Now, fie! fie! When a girl has made such a tremendous bargain, why should she rail against fortune?"

Mabel sat crouched in her sofa under the terrible words. They were uttered so cynically, so coolly, that she could not reply; and, above all, they were *true!* She sold herself in the marriage-market, and she had no reason to complain of the price. She could only feebly say:

"When people repent of their bargain, they are sometimes allowed to revoke it. Have you any objection?"

"The greatest, my dear. I could not think of revoking such an important contract, and one so advantageous to you on any terms. You see I am disinterested. I do not consider myself. All the gain is on your side; and I have such a deep interest in you that I should consider myself ungenerous were I to take advantage of your offer. No! my dear *wife*," he laid terrible emphasis on the word, "we are linked together for good or ill, and must remain so. And now, one little word! You are very innocent if you don't know that these little differences of temperament do exist in all married circles. They do. Men of the world, like myself, understand

this well; and, when they see more than the usual demonstrations of affection between married people, they shrug their shoulders, and say something about Mrs. Caudle's Lectures. But they are wise enough to keep their secrets to themselves. Now, this is what I want you to do. Whatever happens, you must understand that the social *convénances* shall not, and must not, be put aside. In polite circles, emotionalism is a crime. Anything but that. You may be angry, or discontented, or envious, or unhappy; but you must not show it. We do not love each other; and I suppose never shall — ?"

He stopped as if questioning her.

"Never," she said solemnly.

"Very good. *Tant mieux.* But at least, let us not have scenes. Now, that little scene last night was not quite becoming. It hurts people. And, what is worse, it makes people talk, and conjecture, and form opinions."

"What do you refer to?" she asked, feeling at last that he was plunging beyond his depth, out of the region where his cynicism made him safe.

"I mean your collapse, your fainting-fit, your ungoverned emotion in that drawing-room. It was unguarded, and unbecoming."

"I could not help it," she said, drawing him into deeper depths.

"Oh, yes! you could. There was really no necessity for it."

"It was a dread revelation to a woman, to a wife," she said.

"What? You don't mean that any woman would

regard a little excess as an unforgivable offence in her husband?"

"Quite the reverse," she answered. "I regarded it as a blessing."

"As a blessing?"

"Quite so!"

"How?"

"Because for the first time you told the truth, and revealed yourself."

"How? I don't understand," he said. The darkness shut out the sight of pallid lips and whitened face. But Mabel knew that her moment of triumph had come. Yet she hesitated. The truth was too terrible to be spoken. Even to such a callous and unfeeling wretch, it was hard to speak so bitter a word. But she felt it was an opportunity that once lost would never be recovered. She recalled for a moment all his stinging words to fortify her lest her woman's heart should fail her. She repeated them, over and over in her mind; and yet so swiftly that the pause seemed unnoticed. The bitter language stung and smote her into a passionate desire for revenge. She yearned to say the one word that would kill him. But, she had discretion enough left to allow him to drag the fatal word forth.

"You told a strange story," she said. "It was sensational enough for a new magazine."

"Yes, when it made you faint and swoon," he replied.

"It was well invented," she said.

"I'm glad to hear you say so," he said. "It reflects credit on my imagination. It so excited the fancy of

that professor over his whisky, that he should have it again over his tea."

"It cleared up one or two mysteries for me," said Mabel.

"Indeed?"

"Yes! The Sanscrit writing that came with the porphyry vase." Then she added, as in a tone of unconcern:

"The porphyry vase is broken!"

He started back, and muttered in a tone of alarm:

"Hell! Who broke it?"

"I," she said. "The green snake stirred in the bottom of the vase, and I thought it might have stung me. I struck it with the heavy steel shell, and the snake was crushed into powder; and the vase parted in two."

"You have done an evil thing," he replied. "You have summoned and defied your Fate, and you will rue it. . Come now. Let us see the mischief you have wrought!"

He put down his hand in the darkness, as if to reach her shoulder. He touched her cheek rudely. She sprang instantly to her feet, and flung him aside.

"How dare you touch me," she said, "you — a *leper?* How dare you come into a respectable family, that has never had a physical or moral blot or stain for generations on their family history, and bring your loathsome presence there? You, an unknown adventurer, whose secret and awful record is only now being revealed; you, a drunkard and a profligate; you, the companion and confidant of occult and loathsome things over there in India; you, the hypocrite, carrying your slimy ways into

decent society, at which you rail and cry out in order to hide your own moral deformity; and you, once a leper by your own confession, and therefore a leper for ever; how could you have the courage, how could you have the heart, you unclean thing, to steal into our home, and bring with you such moral and physical loathsomeness? You have given me position, wealth, social position? Take them! Take them! and give me back my innocence, my ignorance. But you cannot. Oh, my God! you cannot. The evil is done, and not God Himself can undo it! And I am betrayed and lost! I, Mabel Willoughby, who couldn't bear on my finger-tips the presence of an ink spot, nor on my garments the pin-point of a speck; I, who would shudder at a prick of a needle, and thought myself polluted if a fly rested on my hand, — I have to bear *your* presence, to sit with *you* at table, drinking in the pollution of *your* presence, and the hateful contagion that *you* breathe. You unclean brute! there is no punishment on earth sufficient for your crime! But go! Go where you please; and carry with you the curse and the despair of the wrecked and ruined girl you have betrayed!"

Whilst she uttered this last word, she heard the door opening, and saw by the reflection of the gas-jets outside the miserable creature creeping from the room. Then she threw herself back on the sofa, murmuring:

"Father! Oh, Father!"

She was suddenly startled by a fearful crash on the stairs, and the sound of a heavy body falling. She held her breath, divining what it was. There was a rush of

feet, the stifled screams of servants, the rustling and pushing of people vainly trying to lift something weighty. Then a tap at her door.

"Mr. Outram has a fit, ma'am, on the stairs. Will you come and see him?"

She came forth, and her wild pale face startled the servants. She came slowly down into the lobby, shading her eyes from the gas-light, until she stood over the prostrate body of her husband. The butler and footman were trying to lift the inanimate form, whilst the girl-servants helped. Mabel stood still as a statue, looking down on the wretched creature she had dismissed from her side for ever. They had torn open his collar to give him room to breathe freely. There was a gash on his forehead, where he had struck against some sharp projection when falling. He was quite unconscious. The dining-room bell was ringing furiously, where the old, feeble, chair-tied Major was clamouring to know the cause of the disturbance. Mabel coldly ordered the servants to take the prostrate and bleeding form into the breakfast parlour on the ground floor. She swiftly ordered the doctor to be sent for; and then went in to speak to her father.

"Ralph has had a fall or a heavy fit," she said. "I have sent for the doctor."

"How — how did it happen?" asked her father, watching with some curiosity her white, drawn face.

"I don't know. I think it was what they call 'a visitation of Providence.'"

"Where was he? Where was he coming from?"

"From my room. We had some explanations. Father,"

she suddenly cried, "this *is* the hand of God; and we must flee, flee from this dreadful place."

"Calm yourself, Mabel," said the old man. "Above all, show nothing to these servants. You know how servants talk."

"I do. But is it better to have to bear everything in silence, than to be talked about?"

"Yes, oh yes!" said her father. "Family secrets, you know, family secrets. And then, your own pride! You must never let on that you have made a mistake. That would never do. It would be an admission of defeat, you know. And think of the position you occupy; and how all your friends would exult over your unhappiness."

"Yes, yes. 'Tis all position, and rank, and secrecy. Oh, if we could only go away somewhere; and be our own natural selves. Father?"

"Yes, dear!"

"If anything happens to Ralph — to Mr. Outram, you and I *must* go away — away — away, anywhere; the more remote the better. We'll take some old castle in Scotland where there's no one within a hundred miles, or go to Brittany, or — somewhere, anywhere out of the world!"

"Very well, my dear. But I must have some kind of doctor near me. There now, go see after Ralph. The servants will talk if you keep away from him just now."

She returned to the room where her husband lay insensible on the sofa; and, after giving some slight orders, she went upstairs to her room. As she passed through the lobby, she saw that the pedestal on which the porphyry vase stood had fallen; and that the vase itself lay

shattered into shreds and fragments on the floor. Clearly, it was against one of the sharp, broken fragments her husband had fallen, after he had stumbled and toppled over the pedestal and vase.

"There is some horrible mystery in the evil thing," she thought. "I wish I had in my possession, and could read, that girl's letter."

She took a light to her room; and turned up the gas-jets that hung before her mirror. Then she started back, affrighted at her own appearance. Her eyes were wild and dilated; and her mouth seemed to be drawn down at each side, as if in paralysis; and the flesh of her cheeks was tightened as if pulled by some hidden agony or force. She shook her head at the apparition.

"Ah, Lady Clara Vere de Vere," she muttered, "you put strange memories in my head."

How long she remained in a kind of stupor or ecstasy, staring at herself there in the glass, she could not remember. She was recalled to life and actuality by a tap at her door and the servant's announcement that the doctor had come. Then she made a few rapid changes in her hair, and went down.

He had been examining the patient carefully; for Outram's shirt-front was torn open, and his chest was bare. The doctor was bending over him, making some further examinations, when Mabel silently entered. She stood still by the doctor's side. Presently he turned around, and looked at her.

"Not a fit," he said, "but a fall. He's quite unconscious; but he will recover consciousness immediately."

"He must have stumbled coming down stairs," she said,

without a trace of emotion, "and thrown down the porphyry vase and then fallen on it."

"Very probably. But would you mind leaving me alone for a few moments, until I make a further examination?"

He looked at her in a strange way, as if questioning, Can she bear it? Mabel read his thoughts, and went out. At least this would be a confirmation or a contradiction of her own conclusions.

Dr. Bellingham leaned over the prostrate form again, gently opened again the shirt-front, and looked long and anxiously at his patient. He then took up the helpless hand and examined it. Then he felt the lobes of the ears. Then lifted the closed eyelids.

Ah! those doctors! Grand Inquisitors of the Human Race, from whom there is no secret, because they have their spies in every feature of face, of form; and finger-nails, eyelids, lips, teeth, babble like traitors and informers the history of the victim, whilst the arch-traitors, the ophthalmoscope and stethoscope, probe into the deepest recesses and whisper to the Grand Inquisitor the terrible secrets of brain and lungs and heart, down even to the last thread of nerve and capillary. And, worse still, they tell what they have no right to tell, of hidden sin, and moral turpitude, and secret vice; and by some terrible system of induction tell too of the hidden history of the dead, — of the father, or grandfather, whose sins were supposed to be buried with themselves. Ah, yes! there is no secret. The very leaves will whisper and tell.

For a long time Dr. Bellingham watched and felt, and felt and watched, his patient. Then he drew a long sigh, and said, "Poor girl!"

He touched the bell. Mabel entered.

"It is as I say, Mrs. Outram," he exclaimed, looking at her with dilated eyes, as if questioning, Does she know? and, Dare I tell? "There is shock and slight concussion from the fall; but the wound has bled freely. He will recover consciousness soon; and the effects will soon pass away. His general health is good, is it not?"

"I haven't heard Mr. Outram complain," said Mabel.

"No. He has seen some hard service, I believe. There are cicatrices on breast and arm. I suppose sword-cuts."

"I never heard my husband say he was in action," said Mabel.

"No. Perhaps not. It may be something else. But the Major is better, is he not?"

"My father?" said Mabel, noticing the sudden change in the doctor's words, and divining ill news from that little circumstance. But she quietly said: "No. Not much better. I suppose he will never get better."

"Hardly. We can only mitigate his sufferings. I had better see him, as I am here."

Doctor and wife were staring at each other during this brief conversation, doctor asking his conscience, Ought I tell? Mabel asking, Does he know? Both were playing a great part in that ugly drama there in that silent room before that prostrate form. The servants were whispering and tittering outside in the hall. The doctor moved to go. Mabel said:

"Doctor, I have something to ask you."

"To be sure!" said the doctor, folding up his stethoscope.

"About these wounds; these cicatrices!"

"Don't!" said the doctor, his eyes filling with tears.

"May God help me, then!" said Mabel.

"May God help you, child," said the doctor.

CHAPTER XXXI

GREAT PREPARATIONS

FATHER COSGROVE did not at all like the new development things were taking. Fate, or the Fates, were rushing matters on in a way he decidedly disapproved of. Not that he was what is called in college slang "a safe man." He was one of those imprudent characters that are always doing the very things human foresight tells them they should not do. Nor was he an advocate of that cast-iron conservatism which studies only "the things that are," and whose motto is "Let well alone!"

He was quite enthusiastic about Maxwell, when Hamberton told him all.

"A fine fellow!" he said. "Ah! if we had a few more like him!"

"What would then become of the patience and long-suffering of your people?" Hamberton asked maliciously. "You good Christians are always inconsistent. You say character can only be developed by trial and combat. But you want to avoid trial and evade combat whenever you can. You say adversity is the royal road to Heaven. But you want prosperity by preference, and Heaven into the bargain. You want to catch the two worlds with one hand. Now, if I were anything, I should be a Manichæan. I would like to believe that there is a Spirit of Evil, created specially to prove the good; and an overmastering Spirit, the Over-Soul of things, to reward their fidelity —"

"That's what we believe!" said Father Cosgrove, faintly. He always felt in the hands of such an antagonist as helpless as a babe; though he knew he had the strength of truth on his own side.

"Precisely. But you fight the Prince of Darkness by evading him, not by facing and conquering him."

"Is it all arranged then?" asked Father Cosgrove, anxious to get away from these "foolish controversies."

"Practically all. You're sorry?"

"I am. That is — you know — I'm not," said the priest, making circles in the air. "'Twill all come right! 'Twill all come right! Providence is guiding all in its own wise way!"

"There is then a Demiurgos intermeddling in human affairs?" asked Hamberton. He enjoyed the discomfiture of this simple man, whose faith he admired and envied.

"No!" said the priest, solemnly. "There is a God, and you will —" he stopped, lest he should say anything harsh, "*know it!*"

"Perhaps? The great Perhaps!" muttered Hamberton.

"Does Mr. Maxwell know all?" asked the priest.

"All what?" said Hamberton. He was actually getting vexed, losing his philosophical equanimity at the reiteration of the word "God."

"All about everything?" said the priest.

"Of course!" said Hamberton. "What has he to know?"

"Oh, of course not," said the priest, inconsequently. "I mean all your generous treatment of Miss Moulton's father?"

Hamberton was struck silent. He watched the pale,

placid face before him for a long while, trying to read hidden meanings beneath the words. He thought he discerned a subtle arraignment of his own conduct in this simple guise of language. Did this priest mean something else? Did he say, although not in as many words, "You are concealing from this honourable man, Maxwell, the fact that his future wife is the daughter of a felon"?

But that pale face was impenetrable. Hamberton would have liked to be angry or cynical; but he couldn't. And his honesty told him that he had made a very serious mistake in not having told Maxwell all before matters reached their crisis. He said gently:

"You don't want the marriage to take place, good father; and I should be the last to complain, for I know your motives, your generous motives, towards myself. But it must go on. It is fate. And you may trust my honour. Maxwell shall know the whole history of Claire and her father, if he has not already heard it from her own lips."

"Quite so! quite so!" said the priest. "You are always so honourable."

"And now," said Hamberton, "you must give me all the help in your power towards rebuilding Lisheen Cottage and putting things in order. You have great influence with the Land League —"

"You have much greater," said the priest. "They'll do anything for you; and this will make you a hundred times more popular."

"But I must tell them it is all Maxwell's generosity," said Hamberton.

"Not yet!" said Father Cosgrove. "That would spoil all just now. They would hardly believe such an extraordinary story; and you know that just now there is a strong feeling against him."

"I suppose they're not sorry for his arrest?"

"Indeed no. It was just what they expected," they say.

"Human nature again, always gloating over misfortune. The instinct of the beast everywhere. The same fury that drives a terrier into a rat-hole, or a ferret into a rabbit warren, is dominant in the human heart. And your religion hasn't expelled it. The fisherman on the river bank, plying his 'gentle craft' of murder, the fowler on the hillside with his gun, the hunter on his horse, the prosecutor in a court of what is called justice, the minister plotting war in his cabinet, the mob around a gallows, are all alike. The same brute instinct of destruction is everywhere; and neither religion, nor education, nor progress, nor civilization, can root it out. We are a hopelessly lost race —"

"There are good men in the world, too," said Father Cosgrove, faintly.

"A few," said Hamberton. "There would be a good many more, if they would only adopt the maxims and follow the life of that gentle prophet that appeared in Judæa some centuries ago. But all that is dead, dead! Nature has again asserted itself against Christ, and has won all along the line. And human nature is hopelessly bad."

His head had sunk down upon his chest, as was always the case when he was deeply moved and disturbed.

Then he flung aside the depression, and said, in a chuckle of delight:

"Won't it be rare fun deceiving those fellows? What a revelation to those hounds who would hunt Maxwell down? I'll make them cheer themselves into a kind of aphasia, the day I shall be able to reveal to them that there is *one* man alive. Won't it be dramatic; and won't it be a revenge?"

"They don't mean it; they are ignorant!" said the priest.

"Of course, of course. So is the hawk when he has a sparrow in his talons; so is the hound when he has his white teeth in the neck of the hare. Yes: you are right. They are ignorant. It is all blind instinct — that terrible blind force that evolves everything, and then selects, by a cunning process of selection, only those things that are fit to live. But, now, we must commence at once. The time runs by. When does the mighty — the almighty League meet?"

"On Sundays at the school-room."

"Then we shall make a beginning next Sunday. It is a good work, is it not? and therefore no violation of the Sabbath!"

There was a slight commotion the following Sunday at the Land League, when in the midst of a full house, and in the thick of a hot debate, Hamberton was announced.

There was instant silence; and all angry feelings were hushed in his presence. He entered with that calm assurance that marks the Englishman the wide world

over, — in the hotel, in the dining-hall, in the picture gallery, under the dome of St. Peter's, under the shadow of the Pyramids. Other races assume an air of deprecatory politeness as if claiming a privilege; the Englishman owns the whole world, and claims it as a right. He took the chair offered him obsequiously, and sat down.

"I just called in to say," he said, without apology or excuse, "that the McAuliffes are to be reinstated in their homestead the moment they are liberated from prison —"

There was a mighty cheer and many an exclamation: "God bless yer 'anner, we wouldn't doubt you," etc., etc.

"And under circumstances that will effectually prevent them from being disturbed again."

Here there was a wide gape of curiosity and surprise.

"Their farm has been purchased —"

There was a scowl and the men closed up.

"For them."

There was another mighty cheer. The excitement became almost painful.

"I hold the deed, granting them fee-simple in Lisheen for ever."

It was only the natural fear of the "gintleman" that prevented them from lifting up Hamberton on their shoulders, and chairing him around the room.

"And now," he continued calmly, "I want you to do this. The friend who has bought this place, and made it over for ever on the McAuliffes ("God bless him, and spare him long") wants to give these poor people a little surprise. He wants them to come into a farm, ready-stocked, — the cows in the byre, the pigs in the sties, the fowl in the yard; he wants the house rebuilt, but main-

taining all its ancient features; he wants the fields ploughed and harrowed and sown; the drills full of potatoes, the grass-corn springing from the soil. He wants all the fences repaired, new gates erected, hedges trimmed; and he wants you, the Land League of Lisheen, to do it all." Their faces fell. Where could they get money to do all that gigantic work?

"I'm afeard, sir, the 'frind' is playing a joke an us," said the Chairman. "What you're afther spakin' about would cost about two hunner' pound, and where's that to come fram?"

"Thrue, begor," said a joker. "'Tis like the man that promises a tousand poun's to build a chapel, if every wan else will give a tousand poun's too!"

Here there was a general and most sarcastic laugh.

"The *friend*," said Hamberton, with cold sarcasm, "doesn't propose to do things half-way, and leave them there. He is prepared to pay all the expenses of the improvements I have suggested — all! He simply wants the Land Leaguers of Lisheen, who, I presume, are patriotic, and ready to die for their country, to give the labour. Or, to put it plainly and categorically, he will defray all the expenses of building the house, — masons', carpenters', and all tradesmen's wages; he will pay for gates, and seeds, and manures and everything. He simply wants to know will you plough the field, trim the hedges, put in the seed-corn and potatoes — do, in a word, the agricultural labour, and —" he added with some bitterness, "if you require it, he will pay *you*."

The bitter words cut them deeply; but they could not resent it.

"Well, then, as your honour has been so magnanimous," said the Chairman, "it would be a quare thing if we did not second you. I'll guarantee that my plough will be in the field to-morrow at six o'clock—"

"And I—"

"And I—"

"And I—" said a dozen voices.

"Well, then," said Hamberton, "I leave the labour details in your hands. I go on now to Tralee to see a contractor about the house. I shall see after everything myself; and, when I am not able to be on the spot, my steward will take my place."

He was turning to go; but they stopped him at the door. One of them came forward sheepishly, and said:

"Is it the desarter, you mane, yer honour? For, if it is, the divil a wan of us will work ondher him."

"Yerra, no! Sure he's in gaol, and likely to remain there," said another.

"What objection have you to Maxwell?" said Hamberton.

"He interfered the day of the eviction," said the Secretary, "and previnted a settlement."

"And according to all accounts, he's likely to have other occupation," said another.

"Oh, all right," replied Hamberton. "I won't force him upon the workers. And probably he won't care to have anything to do with it. But—"

He stopped, and looked around calmly on the excited faces.

"It would be well for you, good people, not to be too quick at your conclusions about things in general. It is

not pleasant to have to change your opinions too often."

And he left.

Meanwhile, Maxwell had passed through the little trial that was but a preliminary to his release. And leaving the police office, where there was no little confusion and shame and recriminations for their blundering, he made his way southward, in the warm, sunny weather to his beloved hermitage above Caragh Lake. Of course, now, when he had neither Aleck, nor his tent, he had to put up at the hotel; but as there were only half-a-dozen visitors there, mostly silent Englishmen, he felt no inconvenience.

The day after his arrival, and when he had posted to Brandon Hall an account of his adventures in Tralee, he set out in the early morning, to visit the mountain hollow where he usually pitched his tent. The place, of course, was quite unchanged, except that, as he approached, a hare jumped from her form right in the very spot where his tent was usually erected. He sat down on a clump of dry heather, lit a cigarette, and began to muse on the strange events of the past few months. That scene in the Dublin club, the forfeiture of the ring, his own weary journeys in search of employment, his welcome at Lisheen, the tenderness and gentle courtesy of the poor people with whom he lodged, their attention to him during his sickness, his meeting with Hamberton and his niece, his betrothal, his arrest, — and all in a few months —

"I can't say," he muttered aloud, "'to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow. Thus creeps our petty pace

from day to day.' 'Tis dramatic enough for a two-cent novel. But, there, I shall have to give up my Shakespearian renderings. They have got me into trouble enough."

And he did not quite know whether to laugh at, or be angry with, the midnight espionage of Debbie and her brother, and their interpretation of his moonlight soliloquies, as revealed in her depositions.

"I suppose the time will come," he thought, "when these poor people and their kind will not be such strangers to Macbeth and Othello. But it appears far distant, far distant."

He rose up, and looked down along the valley to the lake. There was a slight golden haze suspended over vale, and woodland, and water, and all was still beneath its gauzy folds, unless where, from far thicket or copse, the blackbirds and thrushes were pouring out their flute-like melodies. Down along the ravine, as far as he could see, the sides were clothed with yellow gorse, and the air was heavy with the cocoanut perfume that exhales from the essential oil of the golden petals; and beneath the gorse, the hedges were carpeted thickly with yellow primroses and purple violets, until the whole valley was a mass of colour and light. The air, up there on the hills, was so light and pure it was a physical pleasure even to breathe; and the deep azure canopy above seemed to hang like a great blue dome, flecked with silver, over the peaceful temple of the earth.

Maxwell watched the scene eagerly; and somehow he felt that that pungent tobacco odour was a desecration of such sweetness and purity; for he flung his cigarette impatiently away, and strode slowly up the mountain.

When he had leaped the little burn that ran sparkling across the road in front of Darby's cottage, he stood still for a moment to admire the new coat of thatch that lay, warm and snug, over the cabin. Altogether there was a decided improvement in the appearance of the place, although the ducks still quacked melodiously as they wallowed in the green, stagnant, compost-lake before the door.

He entered gaily, with the usual: "God save all here!" He had now adopted the manners and language of the country.

The old woman was bending over the fire in that calm, meditative attitude so characteristic of our people. Darby had, as usual, tilted back the *sugan* chair, and had his red shins almost in the blaze that shot up from the wood and turf fire on the hearth. He nearly lost his balance, as he jumped to his feet, recognising the old, familiar voice, although now disguised beneath the Irish salutation. The old woman never stirred, but only muttered:

"An' you too, sir!"

"Yerra, 'tis the masther," said Darby, giving his mother a poke. And then he turned round, his face beaming with pleasure and excitement, and his white teeth showing beneath the grin.

"Well, Darby, how are you? And how is mother?"

"Begor, as well as yer 'anner 'ud wish," said Darby. "Sure, it does our hearts good to see you."

"Yerra, is it the masther, Darby?" said the old woman, rising slowly from her seat. "Yerra, why didn't you tell me? Oh, *cead mile failte*, a thousand times over, yer 'anner. Sure you're welcome to our little cabin."

"Well, I see you've got the new coat of thatch," said Maxwell. "Does it keep out the rain?"

"Oyeh, that it does, sure enough. If it was peltin' cats and dogs, not a dhrop 'ud come in now. An' sure you have our prayers night and day, for that same."

"I'm afraid Darby doesn't kill himself with the prayers," said Maxwell. "Tell the honest truth now, Darby. Would you be rather saying your prayers, or snaring a rabbit?"

Darby grinned, and blurted out:

"Begor, yer 'anner, I'd rather be snarin' the rabbit. Cos why, me mudder keeps me too long on me knees with all the prayers she do be sayin'."

"I thought so. Well, look here! I'm comin' up again next month for a day or two, and I'll send on the tent. I won't bring Aleck this time, as it will be too short. But I'll leave it in your care, whilst I'm away."

Darby was in Heaven.

"I have another bit of news for you. I'm afraid my tenting-days will soon be over. I'm getting married in the autumn."

"Ah, thin, wisha, may you be happy, and may your ondhertakin' thry with you; and may you get the sweetest and best young lady widin the four says of Ireland," said the old woman.

"Have you nothing to say, Darby, you scoundrel?" said Maxwell.

But Darby was silent. He had suddenly fallen to earth. His face was a picture of misery.

"An' must you give up the tint, yer 'anner, an' the fishin', an' the shootin'? Oh, tare an' ages," said he,

breaking into tears, "to tink of giving up the gun, an' the rod, an' the boat, an' the dog, an' all the fun! Oh, wisha, mavrone, mavrone, sure 'twas the bad day she crassed yer 'anner's path."

And Darby turned away weeping. The idea of any man giving up the mountain, and the lake, and the grouse, and the whirr of the partridge, and the pull on the rod, for the tame felicities of married life was incredible.

"Never mind, Darby," said the master, "some day you'll be getting married yourself; and you and the old woman can come down with me, and I'll get you a lodge; and maybe," he added, "we'll have a crack at the woodcock, or a pull on the lake again."

Darby's face brightened. The old woman's was clouded.

"Wisha, thin, yer 'anner," she said, "you shouldn't be puttin' thim thoughts into that omadán's head. What a nice father of a family he'd make, wouldn't he? Betther for him airn his bread, an' mind his ould mother, so long as she's wid him. An' sure, me time is short!"

"Never mind, never mind!" said Maxwell, who felt he was treading on dangerous ground. "But come along, Darby, and let us look around."

They descended the hill together. Darby evidently was preoccupied with deep thought. He tried to keep behind the master in the old way. He felt he was presuming too much in walking side by side.

"Is there anything the matter, Darby?" said Maxwell at last. "Are you sorry I'm coming back again?"

"Oh, wisha, thin, 'tis I'm glad, yer 'anner. It lifts the cockles av my heart to see you in the owld place. But —"

"Out with it, man," cried Maxwell. "Say anything you like."

"Well, thin, yer 'anner," said Darby, blushing till his face was as red as his bare chest, "were you in airnest, or only makin' game of me, whin you said, 'Maybe you'd be married too'?"

"Oh, is that the way the land lies, you villain?" said Maxwell. "Come now. Who are you thinking of?"

"Well, thin, yer 'anner, there's a purty little shlip of a colleen down there in the village, an' sure —"

"Yes, I know," said Maxwell. "Your eyes are burnt out of your head looking at her?"

"Begor, they are, yer 'anner," said Darby, scratching his red locks.

"I suppose, now," said Maxwell, "you do be looking oftener on her than on the priest at Mass on Sunday?"

"Whinever he does be sayin' the hard words that I can't undershthan'," said Darby, "sure I can't help turning round."

"I see. What's her name?"

"Noney Kavanagh," said Darby, "as purty a little —"

"All right," said Maxwell. "We take that for granted. Now what can I do for you?"

"I was thinkin' — maybe, yer 'anner —"

"Out with it," said Maxwell. "What do you want?"

"I was thinkin', if I had a new pair of corduroy breeches, yer 'anner, an' brass buttons —" Darby stopped.

"Yes, I see. The corduroys would fetch her. Is that it?"

"Well, you see, yer 'anner, she do be making game of me sometimes about these 'sthramers'; and since Phil

Doody got a new shirt wid money his sisther sint him from America, she won't look at me at all, at all."

"Well, then, we'll beat that fellow hollow, Darby," said Maxwell. "What would you say to a whole new suit of tweed?—"

"Oh, tare an' ages, that would be too much intirely, yer 'anner. An' sure if I turned out so grand, the nabours are bad enough to say I killed or robbed some wan."

"Well, then, I'll tell you what," said Maxwell. "We'll get the corduroys — and maybe they'd be more serviceable than the tweed up here; and we'll also get a new frieze coat with the biggest buttons that can be got for money; and, look here, Darby, you'll have to get some shirts—"

"Yerra, for fwhat, yer 'anner?" asked Darby. "I don't be a bit cowld."

"I know that," said Maxwell. "And probably I'm putting you in for an attack of pneumonia, that may end in consumption. But you see, Darby, I'll have to introduce you to my wife; and when you come down to the lodge, you'll be meeting people that are hampered by civilization, and — somehow, you know, they like to see — well, — a shirt-front."

"Do they thin?" said Darby, in surprise. "Well, whatever yer 'anner likes. Sure, I'd do more than that for yer 'anner."

Maxwell smiled.

"I know you would," said he. "Although I admit you are making a sacrifice now. But, tell me, what about the wedding? Won't you want a gallon of whisky, and something to give Noney, and —"

"Oh, begor, yer 'anner is too good intirely," said Darby, who began to fear that this generosity was too excessive to be genuine. "Maybe, it 'ud be as well to ketch the hare fust?"

"Oh, never fear that," said Maxwell. "To make a long story short, I calculate you'll want about five pounds to win Noney, to furnish a little house, and to have a decent wedding. I'll give it to you —"

"Oh, yer 'anner, that's too much out an' out. Yerra, what 'ud I be doin' wid all that money? An' sure Noney tould me, that her mudder 'ud give her a feather-bed, an' blankets, an' half the chickens in her yard the day she was well married."

"So ye'er been talking it over," said Maxwell. "That's right. I tell you, Darby, we'll settle Doody. We'll leave that fellow without a feather in his cap. Now, will you take the money now, or shall I send it?"

"Oh, begor, yer 'anner, I wouldn't tetch it for the wurruld. Where the divil could I hide it? The ould 'uman 'ud search me high and low for it."

"You couldn't hide it?" said Maxwell.

"Av I swallowed it she'd see it," said Darby. "She'll sarch every bit av me now whin I goes in to see did I get anythin' from yer 'anner."

"Can't you hide it outside, you omadán?" said Maxwell. "Aren't there a hundred holes where you could put it?"

"Yerra, but, yer 'anner, sure I'd never have a wink of shleep agin, thinkin' that somewan would shtale it. Oh, Lord, no! 'Twould never do at all, at all."

"Well, thin, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give the money to the priest to keep for you until the day you're

married; and then you can snap your fingers at the old woman."

"The very thing, God bless yer 'anner. But —" his face fell, as a new difficulty presented itself. "Father Tom is the divil himself agin the dhrink. Av he thought we were goin' to have a sup of whisky at the wedding, he'd pull the chapel down an us."

"Well, I'm not going to tell him; and sure you needn't say much about it. When 'tis all over, he can't do much harm."

"N — no," said Darby, doubtingly. Then a bright thought struck him, and he cheered up.

"'Twill be worth a power an' all of money," he said, "wid the priest whin yer 'anner spakes for me; and maybe —"

"Maybe what?" said Maxwell.

"Maybe, if you axed him, he'd put in a good word for me wid Noney."

"I will, to be sure," said Maxwell, "though perhaps he won't care to be a matchmaker. Anything else?"

"Maybe yer 'anner 'ud give Jack Clancy, the tailor, the ordher for the corduroys?"

"All right. And the coat? But what about the measurement?"

"Ah, he needn't mind about that," said Darby. "Sure, yer 'anner can tell him make the shuit for a bye of eighteen; and sure, av it is a couple of inches aither way, 'twill make no matther."

"All right, Darby. 'Twill be all right. Meantime, I'll send up the tent. I'm only sorry I can't dance at your wedding. But, we'll settle Doody, won't we?"

"Begor, we will, yer 'anner. Long life to yer 'anner; and may you reign long."

The two conspirators parted, Maxwell for Brandon Hall, and Darby for home. But before he reached it he executed many a *pas seul* on the mountain road, to the astonishment of sundry rooks and jackdaws, who gravely cawed their disapprobation. But he couldn't help it. His heart was as light as a feather; and now and again he stopped, whistled "The wind that shakes the barley," or "The top of Cork Road," and danced to his own accompaniment, flicking his fingers in sheer delight above his head.

But when he entered the cabin he was as serious as an owl.

"Is the masther gone?" said his mother.

"He is," said Darby, sulkily.

"What did he give ye?"

"Divil a copper. Not a thraneen of a sixpence even!"

"Don't be decavin' me, *ma bouchal!* I know the masther better. Come here, an' lemme thry you!"

"Here, thin," said Darby, "as you won't believe me worrd!"

The good mother felt his pockets, and his tattered sleeves, and his trousers. She then made him open his mouth and show his teeth and gums. She found nothing.

"Lift up yer feet, you omadán!"

Darby raised his broad feet, the soles of which were as thick as leather. There was nothing there. She went back to her seat, grumbling.

"'Tis quare," she said. "I suppose he's getting close."

"Didn't you hear his 'anner sayin' that he was goin' to be married?" said Darby.

"I did. I suppose he's saving up for the wife?"

"Av coorse he is," said Darby, winking softly at himself.

CHAPTER XXXII

A BAPTISM OF TEARS

INTO the eyes of all vanquished and despairful things, human or other, there comes a wistful look, that seems to denote the end of the struggle, and to say: "Do what you will now! I am conquered." You see it in the poor speckled thing that has been dragged from its element, and lies gasping on the wet grass above the river; you see it in the fiercest brute that has fought and bit, and trampled for life, and now lies still at the feet of his conqueror, awaiting the final blow. The great artist put it in the stone eyes of the "Dying Gladiator," and the suppliant look of "Laocoon"; the mightier Artist puts it in the eyes of every dying and conquered thing, to win mercy perhaps from his conquerer.

Even such was the look that fell on Mabel Willoughby's face from the eyes of her husband, when late in that eventful night, after weary watchings, he recovered consciousness, looked up, closed his eyes to collect his thoughts, remembered all, and looked again. He had been removed to his own room after the Doctor's visit; and Mabel, with a certain love and much loathing, had gone in and out during the night, watching and fearing the moment when his soul would come back again. She didn't know what to think, or what to do. She could only hope in a vague, inarticulate way, which she

would not express to her own mind, that he might pass away in that sleep or coma, and solve the dread problem that now confronted her. For the Doctor's words left no room now for doubt. She had expressed her terrible suspicions; and they had been confirmed. Yes, she had been inveigled into marriage with a man who had been a leper. What other loathsome things lay behind that revleation she dared not conjecture. She knew enough to understand that the disease was ineradicable; and the sense of the horrible injustice done to her, and the sense of terrible despair, fought, side by side, for the mastery of her soul during the long watches of the night. The gas-jet was singing over her head; now and again came the sound of the muffled tread of the servants on the soft carpet outside her door. Now and again, too, night noises, the barking of a far-off dog, or the rumbling of a waggon, came to her ears. But she sat like one petrified, staring blindly at nothing; and sometimes going to the mirror to ask the white face shown there whether she was not in reality mad. Like one in a dream, or a sleep-walker, she stepped from time to time from her room, and passed into her husband's where some maids were replacing and wetting, wetting and replacing, the brown paper saturated with toilet vinegar, that was supposed to relieve the forehead of the unconscious man. The injured woman would look down on the white face and watch the laboured breathing; then return to her own room to resume the posture of statue-like immobility, until the desire of breaking the horrible spell came upon her again. Once, when looking over the past, and recalling all that happened prior to her marriage, the remembrance of the

Indian letter smote her. She went over to her escritoire, and took it out, and turned up the gas-jet to read.

Oh! It was so prophetic — that Indian letter! How every word seemed to rise out of the note paper, and smite her with its deadly truth!

"Ah, yes, that 'Nevermore!' It means you cannot go back to the stalls or the box again — never again be a spectator of the mighty drama. Only an actor."

"True, true," she thought, as she held the letter in her lap. "Nevermore! nevermore! There is no going back. There is no unlearning the one terrible lesson of life!"

She read on.

"Who wants to be happy? No one. At least, I see half the world throwing happiness to the winds."

"How true," she thought. "I, even I, how have I wasted and squandered my years? I *was* happy, at least, comparatively so, because I had no horror, no dread; only a craving, which I should have suppressed. But I didn't know; I didn't know. My God, if there be a God, why is there no test for souls, no means of knowing the awful spirits with which fate insists on uniting us?"

She took up the letter again, and read:

"Yes, yes! These poor benighted papists, wrong in nearly everything else, are right in holding the marriage tie inviolable. Nay, there should be a strict law that marriage shall not be dissolved even in death, because it is enough for each human being to have one world revealed, and no more."

"Very true, dear Edith," was Mabel's comment, "so far as contracting new ties is concerned. God knows I have had enough of the experiment. And surely, if

this — this — man would dare drag another unhappy girl into such a frightful union, no hell could be deep enough to punish him! But why inviolable? We shall see. If there be law or justice in this country, Mabel Outram will be Mabel Willoughby again before many months. The doctor knows all, and he can testify. And what is drink, or cruelty, or infidelity, or incompatibility of temperament to this?"

But as her thoughts ran over the dread possibility of a divorce with all its shame and public exposure; and, as the poor girl thought: "If I dared bring the matter into court, what a dread sentence I should pass on myself — a leper's wife, and therefore, herself, a possible leper," her heart shrank. She was beaten back from the only loophole of escape into the dread slough of misery where she found the actual even less dreadful than the possible.

"I close it with a few bitter tears!" ran the last paragraph of the letter.

"Oh, Edith, Edith," sobbed the poor girl, as her tears fell fast upon the letter. "So do I! But why, oh why, didn't you speak more plainly to me?"

After a while, she folded the letter and laid it aside; and went in again to see the man who had decided her fate for life in such a brutal and unscrupulous fashion. He seemed easier in his breathing; and the maid said:

"Don't take it too much to heart, Ma'am. I think he is coming round. He was moaning now, and he muttered something. I think he was calling your name."

What terrible, if unconscious, irony! she thought.

"I wish you could have some sleep, Kate," said the

unhappy woman. "If you would lie down for a few hours, I could watch."

"You want sleep more yourself, Ma'am," said the girl. "If you cry and give way to your grief for Mr. Outram, you'll make yourself sick. Try and lie down; and I'll call you, if there's any change."

And Mabel went back to her lonely watch again. Sleep? There was no sleep, she thought, for her evermore.

She then did a foolish thing — foolish for any one; thrice foolish for one in her condition of mind. She wanted to *know*, — forgetting that "he who addeth to his knowledge, addeth also to his sorrow." She crept like a guilty creature downstairs, passed into the dining-room, opened a little corner bookcase, and took out a volume of a certain Encyclopædia, marked LAV — PAS. With a certain feeling still of guilt, or rather with the nervousness with which one plunges into a dangerous course of action, she took the heavy volume upstairs, and with trembling fingers opened it at the dread word: LEPROSY. Fearful, yet covetous of knowledge of the dreadful thing, she read down the long, dismal column, read of its probable causes, which made her shudder, its symptoms, its consequences, its different species with all their dread manifestations of putrid flesh, and rotting limbs, and swollen features, and dropping joints — the living death, which is so much the worse than death, inasmuch as it is accompanied by the dread crucifixion of an acute consciousness and an incurable despair. It was all more horrible than she had imagined; and to make the horror more terrible and tragic, she read of the

dread but infallible contagion, and how the disease may lurk unseen for years, but was certain to manifest itself in the end. And so the governments of the world had decreed that whoever once placed foot on an infected island or other leper enclosure was thenceforth ostracized from his kind for ever; and the laws of the world, considering always the safety of the majority, heeded not the sufferings of the few, but made them the victims for the race.

It was all sad, terrible. Mabel looked at her white fingers, as if she already beheld them swollen by disease; touched her ears, as if she foresaw the time when these tender little lobes would drop away in dread decomposition. She had not the grace to pray: *My God! Thy will be done!* She loathed herself for the fate which her imagination assured her was inevitably hers. But lo! in the very climax of her agony, there came a voice, though but a word, of relief.

She had read down to the end of the article, and was about to close the book, when a further paragraph: "*Leprosy in the Middle Ages*" caught her eye. She read on, read the many ceremonies, some awe-inspiring, some consolatory, with which the Mother-Church sequestrated the victims of the dread disease from their kind, and yet surrounded them with that Christlike pity and love which made them not so much the victims, as the victors, of the awful malady. She read of great things done by lepers in the depths of their exile from humanity; of saints, canonized by the Church, who had been lepers; of great poets, whose songs resounded throughout Germany, whilst they toiled away in the leper-hut, and rang the leper-bell; and — her heart stood still as she read:

"In the great majority of cases, we are assured that the wives of these unhappy victims elected to go with them into the tombs and leper-haunts, rather than be separated from those they so deeply loved."

Her white pure hand lay open on the page, as she looked up, and tried to picture to her imagination what that meant.

She saw the stricken creature rise up from the funereal ceremonies in the Church, which were so regulated as to assume that leprosy was a kind of social death, and which therefore resembled in the prayers, the exorcisms, the enshrouding the leprous body in a black pall, etc., the *Exequiæ*, or burial rites of the actual dead. She saw him go forth, sounding his leper-bell, as a warning to all healthy and sane creatures to step aside from his path, and avoid the contagion that exhaled from his diseased body. She saw him go forth from the haunts of men, into remote and solitary places, amongst the wild things of field and forest. She saw him excommunicated from his kind, and sentenced to a banishment where no human voice would greet him, no human presence cheer him ever again. And she saw those brave, loving women, allowed by a merciful dispensation to share such awful sorrows, cheerfully electing to give up home and kindred, and all the sweet, wholesome surroundings of life, to bury themselves in those desert places, to wait upon, and watch, and tend those stricken wretches, with no help but their great, all-conquering love, and their sublime faith in the Invisible Powers that had inspired it. And for them no hope of return to friends or children, even after the death of the leprous victim. By that sublime act of renuncia-

tion they sentenced themselves to perpetual and solitary banishment from their kind.

"It was magnificent — appalling; heroic — insane; madness — glory; sublimity — folly"; thought Mabel. Then:

"These things were for other ages than ours," she reflected. "These were ages of faith and chivalry, of greatness and heroism, though they were Dark Ages. We have changed all that."

"But," the thought would recur, "surely a woman is a woman; and love is love. Can I tear it from my heart, feeble though it be? And am I not called to bear, not expatriation, not solitude, but only patience and toleration? If I go into open court, and expose him and myself to the curious and delighted gaze of the public, what do I gain? Social ostracism. I proclaim myself a leper. If I slink away with father into some remote and solitary place, shall I not carry with me the fatal consciousness that I have shirked my duty? No, Mabel, there is nothing for thee, as for most mortals, but to *endure*. Let me examine, have I as much love left for Ralph as will help me to do so?"

Then she went over the period of her courtship, her marriage, his little acts of courtesy, the deference, amounting to worship, that he always showed her in society; his little presents from time to time, "the little, nameless, unremembered acts of love"; and gradually she felt herself softening towards the stricken creature; and something, if not love, at least bearing a resemblance to it in the shape of duty, came uppermost, and revealed her to herself as something superior to a mere queen of fashion.

She began to feel for the first time a woman; and to recognise that that sacred aspect of her nature and character was higher and holier than she had yet conceived.

The night was now wearing to the dawn, when she arose, closed the book, and knelt. She knew then that she had never prayed before. She had been to church, had read the service, had joined her voice in hymn and anthem, had studied the intonations of the preacher; but she had never prayed. She had never realized the supernatural — the powers that lie hid beyond the senses, and yet exercise so marvellous an influence on human life. But now, as she knelt, there in the silence of the dying night, with the faint dawn creeping through the unshuttered window, she prayed against herself, and for herself. *Against* herself, — against her pride and passion so fearfully revenged and humiliated; against her revolt from obligations deliberately contracted; against the cowardice that would make her break sacred ties, even under so tremendous a provocation. And she prayed *for* herself, for strength and endurance and love to enable her to conquer all physical revulsion, all her loathing and her fear, and be to the wretched and afflicted, if dishonest creature, who is called her husband, a help and a solace during the bitter remainder of their lives.

Then, fortified by the effort, she rose up, and passed into his room.

"I think, Ma'am," said the maid, "that Mr. Outram is coming round. He seemed to open his eyes, and look around as if seeking someone; and then closed them again."

They watched and waited; and after an interval the

eyes of the sick man opened, and, as we have said, rested on the face of his wife. And he seemed satisfied. He only stared and stared and stared; and, when she drew aside, and went over for some cordials, he followed her with the same wistful, yearning look. It seemed to ask for mercy and compassion; for forgiveness, and forgetfulness of aught that could be remembered against him; for a plenary absolution and a wiping out of the dread past.

And Mabel, haunted and touched by that look, and by all her recent thoughts, came over, and bent down, and touched with her lips his forehead and his mouth; and then, as if the pent-up feelings of her soul had swelled and laboured, and burst their barriers, she broke out into hysterical sobbing, and a baptism of hot tears rained down on her husband's face.

Kate, the maid, said to her fellow-servants in the course of the afternoon, that there is no knowing people at all, at all. She thought that Ralph Outram and his wife cared not much for each other, as far as her lynx eyes could judge. And behold, this accident, she said, revealed everything.

"An' who would ever a' thought that Mrs. Outram could cry? Yet, she did, cried like a child," said Kate.

But the others expressed their incredulity. It was play-acting, they said.

And Kate waxed indignant, not for her mistress; but for the imputation that she had been taken in so easily.

CHAPTER XXXIII

LISHEEN

THE three months swiftly swung round; and the time for the liberation and triumph of the evicted owners of Lisheen was at hand. Immense preparations were made on all sides for the great event; and it was decided that the occasion was one that demanded a great public demonstration.

Pierce and Debbie McAuliffe had been dismissed from prison a week prior to the liberation of their parents; but they were detained by friendly hands in the city, on the plea that all should go home together. But they were kept quite ignorant of all the important events that had occurred during their imprisonment. They didn't know they had a home to go to; and Pierce was speculating about employment in Tralee.

When at length the great day arrived, the town was thronged with cars and vehicles of every description — side-cars, country-carts, covered cars, traps; and the whole country-side seemed to have poured in its population to take part in the great ovation that was to be given to the now triumphant victims of landlordism. A deputation was drawn up outside the prison gate; and the moment the poor old people appeared there was a mighty shout of welcome; and to their infinite confusion, an address was read by the Secretary of the League, lauding

their valour to the skies. But not a word about the triumph and surprise that awaited them.

A few times Pierce tried to get through the impenetrable secrecy that seemed to surround everything connected with their liberation; and he began to ask impatiently:

"What is it all about? Where are we going? Sure, we have no home now?"

But he was always met with the answer:

"Whist, ye divil! Can't ye wait, and see what the nabours have done for ye?"

At most, they expected the shelter of a Land League hut.

After much colloguing, and congratulations and toasts pledged twenty times over, yet still with the impenetrable veil of secrecy hanging over everything, the triumphant cavalcade got under weigh. First came the local Lisheen Fife-and-Drum Band in a wagonette, over which a green flag, faded but unconquered, was proudly floating. Next came a side car with Owen and Mrs. McAuliffe, and two intimate friends. Then a succession of cars, every occupant waving green boughs. Here and there was an amateur musician, with a concertina or accordion, playing for the bare life, and in an independent manner; for whilst the Band thundered out "God save Ireland!" the minor instrumentalists played "The Wearing of the Green," or "The Boys of Wexford." In the centre of the procession there was another waggonette, in which Pierce and Debbie had prominent places; and the remaining mile or two was occupied with all the other vehicles, each smothered in a little forest of decorations.

Now and again, the old couple, or Pierce or Debbie, would ask wonderingly:

"What is it all about? Where are we going at all, at all?"

But the answer was:

"Nabocklish! or "Bid-a-hust,"[1] or some English equivalent.

At last they came to the old familiar place, where formerly a rickety, tumbled-down old gate, swinging on creaking hinges, opened into the boreen that led to the house. Here the cars drew aside, so that the McAuliffes might come up and enter their home together. The old people drew aside, refusing to recognise in the cemented and chamfered pillars, and in the blue, iron gate, the entrance to their home. But they had to dismount, and walk up the stoned and gravelled passage, under the trim hawthorn hedges bursting with foliage, and already showing the autumn haws, into the yard that fronted their dwelling.

"Where are ye bringing us to at all, at all?" the poor old woman would ask. "Sure this isn't Lisheen!"

"Whist, will you? Can't you wait till the play is over?" was the reply.

But when they came into the yard, and saw instead of the fragrant manure heap a plot of grass neatly laid out and bordered with huge stones, limewashed and irregular; and when they saw the old thatched barns no more, but well-built stone and slated houses, where seven rich cows were stalled; and when they saw a high, well-

[1] *Na bac leis* = Don't bother me! *Bi id tost!* = Shut up! Silence!

thatched home before them, with large windows instead of the wretched holes that formerly let in, or were supposed to let in, light and air, then astonishment knew no bounds.

All the neighbours had congregated in the yard and stood on the ditches, to see the "coming home" of the victims of landlord greed, and as they entered the yard there was a mighty cheer that rent the heavens, and a chorus of "Cead mile failtes" and "Welcome home!" that stunned the poor people with its heartiness and sympathy.

Then Hugh Hamberton and his ward came forward and stood beneath the lintel of the door, and the former putting up his hand to command silence, and drown the tremendous cheer with which his presence was hailed, there was an instant hush — the hush of great expectation and delight.

Hamberton looked around slowly and contemptuously on the multitude that was thickly wedged together, and his silence made theirs the deeper. Then he spoke in the calm, even way that Englishmen affect, and although he was good-humoured and genial, he could not restrain a certain tone of disdain that accompanied his words.

"My friends," he said, "a certain English statesman has declared his belief that the Irish are a race of lunatics, and that this country is one huge but not well-protected asylum (*great laughter*); and another English statesman has registered his opinion that the Irish are a race of grown-up children (*much laughter, but not so great*). To this latter opinion I am disposed to incline. You're a wonderful people for seeing around a corner or watching

what is occurring at the poles, but you can't see straight before you, or what is under your eyes. (*Slight tittering and rising expectation.*) For example, you have rushed to the conclusion that the reinstatement of this poor family in their farm and home is my work. (*Cries of "So it is, yer 'anner; 'twas you did it! God bless you!"*) You were never more mistaken in your lives. All that I did was to act as a kind of agent or supervisor for the man that, in a spirit of unbounded generosity, has brought about this happy event. I am pleased to be able to claim that much for myself, but no more. (*Cries: "You'd do it, if you could. 'Twasn't from want of the will!"*) That's all right. But now let me explain, and the best way to do so is in the form of a story."

The great crowd pushed up, as they do at the sermon at Mass on Sunday in the country chapels, and hung upon his words.

"In a certain club in Dublin," Hamberton said, "not many months ago, there were grouped together a number of landlords, who had met to settle how they should deal with their tenantry during the coming winter. They had almost unanimously agreed that the good, old system of grinding and crushing the tenantry should be kept up (*cries of "Bad luck to them!" "We wouldn't doubt them" etc.*), that there were to be no reductions and no sales. Well, one young gentleman ventured to protest. He had been reading and thinking a good deal about things in general. And he had come to the conclusion, which you will agree with me was utterly absurd, that he had some business to do on this earth besides squeezing the last farthing from tenants, and squandering it on horses and

dogs. (*Cries of "Oyeh! Begor, that was the quare landlord! We wish we had more like him!"*) He also maintained that it was not quite true that the farmers lived better than the landlords, that they had fresh meat three times a day (*great laughter*), that there was a piano in every cottage, and that each farmer's wife had a sealskin coat, and silver fox furs (*redoubled laughter*). Well, he was contradicted and refuted, and then —"

Hamberton paused for effect, and the silence became painful from the suppressed excitement of the people.

"Then," he continued, "this young gentleman was challenged to prove it, he was challenged to go down and live amongst the peasantry for twelve months, as a common farm-hand; to share their labour, their food, their hardships. Strange to say, he consented. He put aside everything that belonged to him as a gentleman, and he went down and became an ordinary farm-hand."

Here there was a great commotion in the silent crowd, for Mrs. McAuliffe was crying and sobbing, and trying to say something which her tears wouldn't allow. Debbie had turned quite pale. Hamberton sternly commanded silence. He knew the secret was leaking out and that would never do. He could not allow his dramatic ending of the story to be anticipated. But he was almost disconcerted by the fierce, anxious look which the girl now fastened on him.

"After tramping around here and there," continued Hamberton, "the farmers naturally refusing to employ such a white-handed, white-faced labourer, he came to a certain place where he was at last taken in. He was footsore, hungry, tired, and heartily sick of his job, but

he got food and drink and a welcome there, and there he remained for some months, not doing much, as you may suppose, because these landlords, whilst they reap the profits, are not much used to the labour. Then he fell sick and was nursed as carefully as by his mother. At last, owing to one cause or another, the poor family with whom he was housed were flung upon the world. His heart was bleeding for them, but it was too soon to show himself, and besides, he wanted to see all that landlordism could do, and again, he wanted to be able to build up the fortunes of that poor family so that they could never be disturbed again. The day of the eviction he interfered for that purpose, and, as is usual in Ireland, he was misunderstood. He got more curses than thanks, more kicks than halfpence. It is a little way you have in this country of rewarding your friends."

Here old Mrs. McAuliffe got in a word:

"I never misdoubted him, yer 'anner. I knew he was good, and I said, 'Good-bye, and God bless him!'"

This interlude excited now the greatest interest in the crowd. They were on the eve of great revelations evidently, and they crushed in and around the speaker, their mouths wide open in expectation.

"Hold your tongue, ma'am," said Hamberton, sternly, "till I am done. Then you can talk your fill."

"Well," he continued, "the strangest thing remains to be told. This young gentleman, for amusement sake, was in the habit of going up alone into the hills, and there giving out aloud, or as they call it, declaiming, certain passages from an obscure and legendary writer, called Shakespeare. Some of those were murderous and

bloodthirsty, and some were soft and pleasant. The bloodthirsty ones were overheard by a certain boy and girl whose names I won't mention, but who acted as spies on his movements, and, in a moment of passion, informations were sworn against this young gentleman on the ground of murder, and he was arrested. I hope that young lady is sorry for her action now, but it led the way to the revelation. He was obliged now to throw off the mask and show himself, and besides, the time had come to accomplish the work on which he had set his heart."

Hamberton paused, to emphasize the end of his dramatic story, and there was the deepest silence now in the vast crowd.

"That work was this. He purchased the farm on which he had lived as farm-labourer for so many months, and made over by deed, solemnly executed and witnessed, the fee-simple in that farm for ever to the people who had so well treated him; he has spent a sum of eight hundred pounds besides on the place, and made it a worthy residence for ever for these poor people. I suppose I need hardly add that the farm is Lisheen, that it was the McAuliffes that sheltered this gentleman in his hour of need, and that that gentleman who came down in disguise from his position to see and alter the fortunes of the people is Robert Maxwell, Esq., J.P., and D.L. for this County, late farm-hand at Lisheen, and still steward at Brandon Hall."

There was silence during the revelation. Then a faint cheer. Hamberton was disappointed. He expected an earthquake.

"You don't understand, I see," he said.

They looked at one another, uncertain what to think. The truth was, that the story was so strange as to be almost incredible. It seemed to block the avenues of their minds and they could not take it in. They continued staring at one another and Hamberton irresolutely. Then he took out the deed, and calling Owen and Mrs. McAuliffe over to where he was standing, he read out the deed of transfer slowly and solemnly. And then he led them into their new house, theirs for ever and evermore.

At this juncture there was a wild burst of cheering, which was repeated when Hamberton again came forward, and took in Pierce and Debbie.

Once again he came forth and said to some peasants standing near:

"Do you understand me? I say it was Maxwell, my steward and landlord, who has done this sublime and magnificent act towards his friends."

"We do-o-o," said the men, hesitatingly. The fact was, they could not, all of a sudden, get over their feeling of hostility towards Maxwell.

"Then, damn you, why don't you give one decent cheer, or yell for him?"

"Why don't ye cheer?" said a peasant.

"Yerra, yes, why don't ye cheer?" said another.

But they couldn't. And Hamberton, turning to his ward, said:

"You see Maxwell was right in not coming hither. They'd have stoned him."

But he said, with a gesture of contempt towards the crowd:

"There. There's two or three tierces of black porter in the barn. Perhaps ye'll cheer now."

They laughed at his eccentricity and said to one another: "Begor, he's the funny man intirely!"

It was somewhat different in the interior of the cottage when they re-entered to say good-bye to the occupiers.

"You understand, I suppose," he said, "that this place, and all things on it and belonging to it, are yours for evermore, and that no landlord or agent or official of any kind can ever interfere with you again?"

The men looked too stupefied to say anything. They couldn't realize it. The change from the direst poverty to affluence, from a prison to such a home, was too stupendous to be immediately understood. But the old woman grasped the situation at once.

"We do, your 'anner," she said. "An' sure the grate God must be looking afther us to sind us such a welcome."

"We-ell, yes, I suppose," said Hamberton, not quite understanding where supernatural influences came in. "But you know, you understand, that it is Mr. Maxwell, — the boy that was here, do you understand? — that has done all this. These stupid people outside can't grasp it. But you do, don't you?"

"Oyeh, av coorse we do," said the old woman. "And may God power his blessings down an him every day he lives, and sind him every happiness, here and hereafther."

"Nice return you made him for all his goodness," said Hamberton, turning suddenly on Debbie. "You wanted to hang the man who was restoring to you and yours all you had lost."

This was the first time that her parents had heard

of Debbie's depositions against Maxwell. They looked amazed. Hamberton saw it.

"Well," he said, "I'm not going to heap coals of fire on your head to-day. You can make your own apologies to Mr. Maxwell, when he calls. But people should be careful of their passions."

"I did it in a hurry an' a passion," said Debbie, hanging down her head. Then, feeling the eyes of Claire Moulton resting on her with curiosity, she exclaimed with sudden energy:

"I wish to the Lord he had never darkened our dure!"

She affected to be busy about some trifles, but soon added:

"An' av I had me way, we wouldn't be behoulden to him now."

It gave food for reflection to Hamberton as he drove homeward.

"There is no understanding this mysterious people," he said. "And imagine Englishmen, who do everything with rule and compass tape, attempting to govern them for seven hundred years."

"I can understand that girl's feelings," said his ward.

"Well, yes. But such awful pride would be unimaginable amongst the peasants of Devon or Somerset."

"I suppose so," she replied. "But I can understand it. These are the things that make criminals."

"But what beats me," he said quite aloud, as he flicked the flanks of his horse with his long whip, "out an' out, and altogether, and intirely, as they say among themselves, is that I couldn't get a cheer for Maxwell from those dolts.

They didn't seem to understand it, and yet they say they are a clever and quick-witted people."

"I think I understand," she said. "Mr. Maxwell was playing a certain part, and they only knew him in that part. Their imagination, which is very limited, cannot conceive him just yet under any other aspect. Perhaps, in three months or six months, they will grasp it."

"But they are said to be so quick —"

"Yes, in matters concerning their own daily lives. But you see they are now carried beyond their depth. Mr. Maxwell was quite right in not coming. He would have had a hostile reception at first, an indifferent reception even after you revealed his goodness."

"Goodness? That's not the word, Claire. 'Tis greatness, generosity, magnanimity beyond fancy. How Gordon would have grasped his hand!"

"Yes, it was very grand," she said. "Do you know, from the moment I saw him in that wretched cabin, I felt he was a hero."

"Then you kept your mind very much to yourself, young lady. I thought it was a feeling of repulsion you experienced, from some remarks you made."

"And so it was," she replied. "But, I knew he was great. Probably that was the reason I disliked him."

"I give it up," said Hamberton, after a pause. "Woman's mind and the Irish nature are beyond me. I suppose it is because they are so much alike."

"I wonder is that a compliment," said his ward.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A DOUBLE WEDDING

In the early autumn Robert Maxwell and Claire Moulton were wedded. The affair was very quiet and unfashionable. But there were solid festivities at Brandon Hall, and gala times for those employed by Hamberton.

There was but one sorrowful soul and that was Father Cosgrove. He loved them all. But now the great trouble of his life was passing into an acute stage. Would Hamberton now carry out his grim intention and whilst concealing the infamy of it from the world for the sake of his ward, end his life in the Roman fashion? The thing seemed inconceivable in the case of a man surrounded by every happiness that wealth and benevolence could obtain. But Hamberton was a philosopher who had ideas of life and death far above and removed from the common instincts of humanity. And there was no knowing whither these fantastic ideas might lead him. He was a great Pagan, and no more.

With the exception of this one care corroding the breast of the good priest, all things else were smiling and happy. Maxwell was genuinely glad that his severe probation was over and that he had obtained his heart's desire as a reward. And Claire had found her hero.

But why should we linger on such commonplace things when the greater event of Darby Leary's wedding demands

our attention as faithful chroniclers? Let the lesser events fade into their natural insignificance before the greater and more engrossing record. Let the epithalamium yield to the epic.

There was something like consternation in the mountain chapel the second Sunday after the conspiracy between Maxwell and Darby had been hatched. For there was an apparition — of a young man with red hair and a sunburnt face, but clothed as no man had seen him clothed before. For Darby, habited in a new suit of frieze and corduroys, and with his red breast covered by a linen shirt with red and white stripes in parallel lines, did actually make his way to the very front of the congregation, and stand at the altar rails facing the priest. It was unheard of audacity, but Darby, with keen, philosophical insight, had made up his mind that it is audacity that entrances and paralyzes the brains of men, and that if he would escape endless chaff and jokes on his personal appearance, the way to do so was to brave public opinion, and run the gauntlet with open eyes and head erect.

There certainly was a good deal of nudging and pushing one another amongst the boys and girls in his immediate vicinity, but it was all more or less hushed and concealed whilst the priest was reading the *Acts* and the *Prayer before Mass.* For his eagle eye was upon them and upon the chart, and woe to the boy or girl who was otherwise then recollected and devout.

But I am sorry to say that when the priest's back was turned to the congregation there were many "nods, and quips, and wreathed smiles," and when at last the people arose at the time of the sermon, and the tall, angular

figure of Darby occupied a prominent place right at the altar rails, there was some whispering and smothered smiles that made the young priest who was addressing them pause, and look around with some severity. This was all the greater because he was speaking to them on a solemn and mournful subject, and he had hopes of touching their sympathies, and even beholding the tacit expression of their feelings in a few tears. Instead of this he was shocked to see grave men smiling, girls tittering, boys whispering behind their hands; but he went on slowly, watching the opportunity of setting free the flood-gates of his anger. At last he stopped, and the old and venerable verger, who was hardly second in importance to the priest, and who was even more dreaded, alarmed by the sudden silence of the preacher, came forth in an angry and inquiring mood from the vestry. He cast an eager glance around, under which many an eye quailed, and then hobbled over to the rails, and bending down, he whispered angrily to a group of girls:

"What's the matter wid ye, ye parcel of gliggeens?"

"Yerra, shure, 'tis Darby, sir!" said one of the girls, stuffing her shawl in her mouth.

The mystery was explained; and limping over to where Darby was standing defiant and indifferent, he hissed at him:

"Kneel down, or sit down, you omadán!"

Darby instantly obeyed; and the old man, turning to the priest, said with an air of condescending affability:

"You may continue yer discoorse, yer reverence!" and then hobbled back to the sacristy.

Strange to say, the little incident saved Darby from

much worry outside. The public exposure satisfied the desire of humbling him; and when the congregation was dispersing, he only got a few smart slaps on the back, and a few hurried questions:

"Well wear, Darby; and soon tear, and pay the beverage!"

"Will be lookin' out for the young wife now, plase God!"

"What blacksmith made thim breeches, Darby? I'll want a new shuit meself soon."

But Darby was indifferent. He gave back joke for joke, and lingered behind, with one idea uppermost in his mind. He seemed to be looking straight before him; but he had eyes only for a little figure in a faded shawl, that was mixed up with a lot of others as they crushed through the outer gate.

It is hard to discern, or define, the secret laws that guide the currents of our lives, and bring together the individuals that are to be mated for good or ill. If you stand near a stream that has been vexed into foam by rocks or sands, probably you would guess for ever before telling what specks of foam or air bubbles would meet far down the river and coalesce in their journey to the sea. And we fail to tell how it was that the many members of this Sunday congregation fell away as they passed down the hillside, and left Darby and Noney together. The two were silent for a while, and then Darby, opening his new frieze coat to show his magnificent shirt front all the better, said, in a loud whisper:

"Noney?"

"Well," said Noney, looking steadily before her.

"Noney, did ye see me the day?" said Darby.

"I did," said Noney. "It didn't want a pair of spectacles to see you."

"And what did ye think of me?" said Darby, quite sure of himself.

"I think you were nicer kneelin' than standin'," said Noney.

"Wisha, now," said Darby, a little abashed. "I shuppose 'twas bekase me back was turned to ye."

There was an awkward pause of a few seconds; and then Darby, getting on a different tack, said:

"I have a grate secret for ye, Noney."

"Indeed?" said Noney, quite unconcerned.

"Yes," replied Darby; "me and you are made for life."

"Me and you?" replied Noney, saucily. "And what have we to do with wan another, may I ax?"

"Oh, very well!" said Darby. "Maybe, thin, Phil Doody will tell you."

"An' what have I to do wid Phil Doody?" said Noney, in feigned anger. "Phil Doody is nothin' to me more nor to any wan else!"

"Say that agin, Noney," replied Darby, ecstatically.

"I say that there's nothin' betune me an' Phil Doody, more than any other bhoy!" said Noney.

"I thought there was thin," said Darby. "But people will be talkin'. Nothin' can shut their mouts."

"Phil Doody is a dacent enough kind of bhoy," said Noney, after an awkward pause. "I believe his sisters are well off in Ameriky."

"So they do be sayin'," replied Darby, who did not like

the allusion at all. "I suppose they'll be takin' him out wan av these days."

"I don't know that," answered Noney. "They say he's got a new job at home; an' I suppose he'll be settling down next Shrove."

"I suppose so," said Darby, innocently. "I hear there's a good many looking after him."

"Is there thin?" said Noney. "I think he's made his chice."

"But shure you said this minit," said the tormented Darby, "that there was nothin' betune you."

"Naither there isn't," said Noney. "Shure he could make his chice widout me."

Darby felt he was not making much headway here, so he tacked. Affecting great lameness, he sat down on a hedge, where he crushed many a pretty flower and wild shrub, and said:

"Noney, these boots and shtockins are playin' the divil intirely wid me feet. Bad luck to the man that invinted thim. Sure there's nayther luck nor grace in the counthry since the people began to wear them."

And without further apology, Darby removed them, and breathed more freely.

"Who gev 'em to you, Darby?" asked Noney, full of curiosity. "They're rale fine brogues."

"Ah, thin," said Darby, sighing, "the man who'd give us much more, an' make us the happy couple av you'd only say the word, Noney."

"Indeed," said Noney, pouting, "an' who is he?"

"The masther," said Darby. Then after a pause, he

continued: "Listen, Noney, an' I'll tell you what I wouldn't tell morchial alive, not even me mudder. The masther was up the other day at the house, an' when he was goin' away, he winked at me, unbeknown to the ould woman, to come wid him. So I did. And then he tould me that he was gettin' married himself to a grand, out an' out lady, wid lashins of gowld and dimons, nearly as much as the Queen of England herself. Oh, I'm all blisthered from thim dom boots," he said suddenly. "Bad luck to the man that invinted ye!"

And Darby began to chafe the foot that appeared to be most troublesome. Noney was on the tiptoe of expectation, and Darby, the rogue, knew it.

"I think we'd betther be goin' home, Noney," he said, glancing sideways at her.

"Betther rest yerself," said Noney. "You could never walk home wid dem feet an ye."

"Thrue for you," said Darby, gaining new confidence. "Begor, ye'd have to be carryin' me, Noney; and wouldn't it be a nice 'lady out of town' ye'd be playin'."

"But what about the wedding?" said Noney, who lost her diplomacy in her curiosity.

"Is it *our* weddin' ye mane?" said Darby. "Shure, whinever ye like. Ye have only to say the worrd."

"I didn't mane that," said Noney, angrily, "an' you know it you omadán, you! I meant the masther's weddin'."

"Ah, shure, 'tis all the same," replied Darby. "Bekase the masther sez, sez he: 'I'll never get married, Darby, onless you're married the same day.'"

"Did he say that?" asked Noney, who began to have larger conceptions of the "Bhoy."

"Pon me sowl," said Darby, "an' more'n that. He said, sez he: 'There's a purty little lodge at the grate house, Darby, as nice as iver you saw, wid little windeys like dimons, and a clane flure, an' a place for the hins and chickens; and whin you're married to Noney Kavanagh,' sez he ('I'm tould she's the rale jewel of a girrl out an' out, and there isn't her likes in the barony for beauty,' sez he) 'you can come here. And sure you can have lashin's and lavin's from our own kitchen,' sez he, 'an' you won't be wantin' for a bit of fresh mate,' sez he, 'for we haves fresh mate every day,' sez he, 'and sometimes two kinds of mate the same day. And sure, Noney, whin she's Mrs. Darby Leary,' sez he, 'can kum up, and help the missus,' sez he, 'an' sure we can be all wan,' sez he, 'and whatever's mine is yours, Darby,' sez he; 'and whatever's yours is mine,' sez he."

Darby here drew a long breath, but watched Noney steadily out of the corner of his eye. He was evidently making a deep impression on the girl. He went on:

"'But, mind you, Darby,' sez he, 'I'm not puttin' any spancils on you. You may tink you're too young a bhoy to marry,' sez he; 'or yer mudder mightn't like it,' sez he. 'But that makes no matther at all, at all. Only I'd like us to be married the same day,' sez he. 'But,' sez he, 'av you don't feel aiqual to it now, you can come,' sez he, 'and get into the Lodge all the same; an' there are some little colleens,' sez he, 'up at the Great House,' sez he; 'and maybe afther a while,' sez he, 'wan of them would be lookin' your way; and sure,' sez he, 'av Noney wants to marry Phil Doody,' sez he, 'lave her —'"

"I don't want to marry Phil Doody, nor anybody else

but you, Darby," said Noney, putting her apron to her eyes; and —

The day was won.

When the priest called afterwards at Mrs. Kavanagh's, and told the good mother what a fancy Mr. Maxwell had taken to Darby, and how he had given him five real gold guineas for the immediate wants and necessities of that young man, with an implied promise of much more in future, Noney nearly fainted at the thought that she was very near losing such a chance and for ever.

She snubbed poor Doody badly. For Phil was a professional joker; and he couldn't help cracking a joke about Darby.

"Wasn't he the show to-day?" he said, in an incautious moment. "Begobs, 'twas as good as a circus. I thought the priesht would fall off the althar."

"Who was the show?" asked Noney, saucily.

"That cawbogue from the hills, Darby," he said. "Who the divil did he kill or rob to get such clothes?"

"Darby Leary is no cawbogue," said Noney. "I think he's a clane, dacent bhoy enough; and sure what he wears is his own."

"He was the laughin'-stock of the congregation to-day," said Phil.

"They had betther be mindin' their prayers," said Noney. "Some people soon may be laughing at the wrong side of their mout'."

Doody looked keenly at the girl.

"Begor, wan would think there was a somethin' betune ye," said Phil, "the way you stand up for him."

"And what if there is?" said Noney.

"Oh, nothin', nothin'," said the abashed Phil. "Good-bye, Noney, and may yer ondhertakin' thry with you!"

Of course, there were troubles. Nothing is worth having without trouble. Noney wavered in her allegiance when people spoke of Darby as a fool, as an omadán, as a half-idiot. Noney relented when she visioned the pretty lodge, and had from the priest's own lips the testimony of the deep interest Maxwell was taking in Darby. The great trouble was with Darby's mother.

That good woman fumed, and swore, and asseverated that no daughter-in-law should ever darken her door, and dethrone her. She broke the bellows across Darby's back when he entered unsuspectingly his cabin, where the news had preceded him. She poured out upon him a torrent of contempt and scorn in the too accommodating Gaelic, which would have withered up and annihilated any one else. Darby only winked at nothing, and held his tongue. Then she went to the priest, and asked his reverence would he have the conscience, or put the sin on his sowl, to marry such an imbecile as Darby.

"I don't think Darby is a fool," said his reverence. "I think he's more of a rogue; and the Canon law of the Church makes no provision for that. At least, I never heard of an impediment in that direction."

"Wisha, thin, yer reverence," she said, "he isn't a rogue, but a poor *gommal*, who desn't know *B* from a bull's-foot."

"H'm," said his reverence. "It seems to me that a young man who has nobbled his master, and secured such a girl as Noney Kavanagh for his wife, is not the innocent you take him to be."

"Wisha, thin," said the old woman, giving in, "I suppose your reverence is right. But may God help him and her. 'Tis a cowld bed she's makin' fer herself."

"I'm not so sure of that," said the priest.

So matters went gaily forward; and, as a matter of fact, the same autumnal sun that shone on the nuptials of Robert Maxwell and Claire Moulton lent his radiance to the humbler but more demonstrative bridals of Darby Leary and Noney Kavanagh.

Noney had stipulated with the good priest that, in the fear of a great popular demonstration, it would be more compatible with her humbler ideas to have a very private ceremony in the vestry-room, unknown to all but the two witnesses required by the Council of Trent. But the profoundest secret will leak out in these inquisitive days; and long before the hour appointed for the marriage, suspicious groups began to gather around the corner of the street where stood the rural chapel.

The marriage was celebrated quietly enough; but when the happy pair emerged, and had got beyond the friendly shadow of the priest, they were met by a tumultuous crowd, who cheered and whistled and chaffed the young pair good humouredly; and accompanied them to the discordant music of tin-whistles to the maternal home.

Darby was sublimely unconcerned. He did not say so, for his vocabulary was limited, but he felt, as many a wiser man should feel under similar painful circumstances, that it was a mere "incident" in the happy life that was opening up before him, and therefore not to be noticed. Noney was annoyed at this demonstration,

which, if it was friendly, was also more or less disrespectful; but Darby whispered:

"Hould up, Noney! Think of the lodge and the two sorts of mate."

And Noney bore the humiliation; and only determined, deep down in her woman's heart, on a subtle revenge; and how she would invite some of these grinning girls to see her over there at Brandon Hall, and show them all the glories of the lodge, and kill them with envy.

But, as the night wore on, all these ugly feelings disappeared, and there was nothing but real *ceol* at the Widow Kavanagh's house. And Darby danced, his bare feet (for he wouldn't have any more to do with shoes and stockings) making soft music to the sounds of the fiddle. And Noney danced "over agin him" at the other side of the door that had been laid as a platform on the floor. And somehow, people began to come round from their contemptuous and critical attitude, as they always do when you keep on never minding them; and before the night was over it was unanimously agreed that a gayer or a handsomer pair had never left the parish.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE ROMAN WAY

WHY did Cato leave that dread example to the world of opening of his own free will and accord the door of life that leads out into the night of eternity? And why did so many of his fellow-countrymen, who had not the excuse of dripping skies and modern nerves, follow that example; and calmly open the veins of the life-current in their gilded baths, or slide from life even under more gruesome circumstances? The emperor is displeased; and Petronius goes down to his Villa at Pæstum, calls his friends together, gives them a glorious Lucullan supper, makes a pretty speech, ending with *Vale, Vale, longum Vale!* lies down on his couch, his favourite slave by his side, and closes his eyes on the world-drama by opening some little hidden chamber in the casket of his body. Or Symphorianus is a little tired of this comical and uninteresting world, and wants to see what is at the other side of things; and — goes to see! Or, Lydia is weary of being told for ever *Carpe Diem*, weary of all these unguents and bathings and cosmetics, and in sheer weariness of spirit she runs through her breast that very stylus with which she pricked the bare arms of her slaves. Or Leuconoë has seen one gray hair, and decided that life is no longer bearable; and the little reptile will just kiss her arm, and she will pass into the dreamless sleep.

Now, Hamberton had read a good deal, knew all about these Roman methods, was an artist and had taste; was refined and hated a mess; and yet, strange to say, he elected first to make his bow to the human auditorium in a vulgar and unclean manner. He had none of the excellent Roman reasons for leaving life, absolutely none. He simply made his choice, just as he would purchase a ticket for London, and then set about accomplishing his design.

Maxwell and his ward had not been long married, and the former was down at Caragh Lake for a few days fishing, when Hamberton one night, on entering his bedroom, thought he would experiment a little with his weapons, and toy a little with Death, before finally embracing him.

He had kissed good-night to Claire, and she had entered her own room, and had been some time in bed, when Hamberton, having donned his dressing-gown, went over to a large mahogany wardrobe, opened a drawer at top, and took out a small, silver-chased revolver. He handled the deadly toy with ease, and fitted in the little cartridges, each snug in its own cradle. He then went over to his dressing-table, and sat down.

There was no sound in the house. The hoarse wash of the sea came up through the midnight darkness and that was all. He listened long to catch the faintest sound that would show that his niece was sleeping; but he heard nothing. He laid the revolver on the table, and began to think.

"If now I were to use that deadly weapon on myself, — just a short, sharp shock — no pain, — how would it be

with me?" And his stifled soul seemed to sob out: "Silence, darkness, rest for evermore! And for them? Horror, shame, despair!"

"Pah," he cried, in his own cynical way, "I would be forgotten the day they had buried me. These young people are engrossed in one another too much to heed a poor suicide."

And for the world? A newspaper paragraph to-day! To-morrow, oblivion as deep as that which sleeps above an Egyptian sarcophagus!

He leant his head on his hands, and looked long and earnestly at the face that stared at him from the mirror. It was a strong, square face, somewhat pallid, and pursed beneath the eyes. But it was a calm face with no trace of anything morbid or nervous or hysterical. "They cannot say: 'Temporary insanity,'" he thought. "Although the Irish will sometimes perjure themselves through their damned politeness."

He took up the weapon, examined it, and raised it carefully and slowly, placing the tiny mouth of the muzzle against his right temple, and pressing it so that it made a little circle of indentation on the flesh. He kept it steadily in this position for a while. Then he stole his index-finger slowly along until it touched the trigger. Very gently he moved the soft papilla of the finger along the smooth side of the steel, thinking, thinking all the while: Only a little pressure, the least pressure — and all was over! Then, suddenly as if for the first time, the thought struck him that he would make a dirty mess of blood and brains in this way; and how the servants would

find him thus in the morning and handle him rudely, and lift him with certain scorn from his undignified position; and how the rude doctor, that detestable Westropp, the drunken dispensary physician, whom he would not let inside his door, would paw him all over, and talk about his well-known insanity; and how a jury of his own employés would sit on him with Ned Galwey in the chair —

He laughed out with self-contempt and loathing, and in his own cynical way, he muttered:

"The Romans had this advantage over us — they folded their togas around them as they died; and no vile hinds and idiots dared disturb their dignity in death."

And he threw the weapon down on the table. There was a flash of fire, one little tongue of flame, and a puff of smoke, and Hamberton fell backwards, not stricken, but in affright.

"That little pellet was not fated," he thought, "to find its grave in my brain."

And then, as another idea struck him, the strong man grew pale and trembled all over, and the sweat of fear came out and washed all his forehead with its dew.

For as he looked he saw that the still smoking muzzle of the revolver pointed straight to the wall, or rather thin partition, that screened Claire Moulton's room from his; and a dreadful thought struck him, as he gauged the height at which the bullet struck, that just at that height, and just beyond that partition, was the bed on which his ward was sleeping. His heart stood still, as he held his breath, and listened. No sound came to reassure him that she had been startled, but not hurt. What if that

bullet with which he had been criminally experimenting had pierced through that lath and paper, and found its deadly berth in the heart of the only being on earth whom he really loved? How could he explain it? What excuse could he give? How would he meet Maxwell? And the words of Father Cosgrove came back, and smote him:

"You cannot go out of life alone!"

He stood still, and listened. If only Claire had screamed, he would have been reassured. But no! Not a sound broke the awful stillness, only the hollow thunder of the sea in the distance. The strong man sat down weak as a child.

Then, he thought, he should solve the mystery, or die just there. So he crept along the carpet of his room, softly opened the door, and passed down the corridor towards his ward's room, where he listened. No, not a sound came forth. She is dead, he thought, killed in her sleep and in her innocence. He tapped gently. No answer. He tapped louder. No answer still. He then, trembling all over at the possibility of finding his worst fears confirmed, opened the door, and said in a low shaky tone:

"Claire!"

Still no answer.

Then, in despair, he almost shouted the name of his ward.

The girl turned round, and said in a sleepy voice:

"Yes! Who is it? What is it?"

"It is only I," he said. "I thought you might be unwell!"

"Not at all," she said. "What time is it?"

"Just midnight," he replied. "I'm so sorry I disturbed you. Go to sleep again."

And he drew the door softly behind him, and re-entered his room. There, he did an unusual thing with him. He flung himself on his knees by his bedside and said:

"I thank Thee, God Almighty, Father of heaven and earth, for this mercy vouchsafed Thy unworthy servant."

He buried his face in the down-quilt, and heard himself murmuring:

"There is a God! There is a God!"

Then he rose up, took the dangerous weapon, drew the remaining cartridges, and placed them and the revolver in the cabinet, undressed, and laid down. But he had no sleep that night.

The dread horror of the thing accompanied and haunted him for several weeks; and then, as is so usual, it died softly away, and the old temptation came back. But now he had determined that, if he should succeed in passing away from life, it should be in such a way that the most keen-eyed doctor or juryman should see naught but an accident. Because, for several days after that dreadful night, he was *distrait;* and often, he caught Claire's great brown eyes resting mournfully upon him, and as if questioning him about the meaning of that midnight visit. And he found himself perpetually asking, does she know? Does she suspect? until somehow a deep gulf seemed to yawn between them of distrust and want of confidence; and he said: "It is the new love that has ejected the old!" And she thought: "Does uncle fear that I have forgotten him in Robert?"

But it seemed to accentuate his desire to be done with things — to pass out to the dreamless sleep that seemed to be evermore the one thing to be desired.

One evening, late in the autumn, he was out on the sea in Ned Galwey's fishing boat. He enjoyed with a kind of rapture these little expeditions; and the more stormy the weather, and the rougher the elements, the greater was his esctasy. Ned always steered, for he was an excellent seaman; and Hamberton used to watch, with mingled curiosity and admiration, the long, angular figure, the silent, inscrutable face with the red beard hanging like so much tangled wire down on the deep chest; and the care and watchfulness with which the man used handle his boat, despite his apparent forgetfulness and silence. He seemed always to rest in that humble posture of silence and quiet, as if dreading to disturb Hamberton; and he never dared speak, except to answer some question.

Hamberton on calm seas would rest in the prow of the boat, half reclined on a cushion, reading or watching the play of the waters. When the weather was rough, he stood on the thwarts, supporting himself with his arm around the mast; and swaying and dipping with every plunge of the boat.

This autumnal evening was black and lowering as if with brewing tempests; and the sea was heaving fretfully under a strong land-breeze that made the breakers smoke near the shore.

Keeping the boat's head steadily against the rush of the incoming tide, Ned managed to avoid the dangerous troughs of the seas, and there was no inconvenience,

except for the shipping of a few seas that left but tiny pools which Ned soon bailed out with his free hand. Hamberton, this evening, stood up on the very last thwart near the bow, yet so that he could support himself against the mast; and the old temptation came back with terrible force.

"Only a little slip of the foot; only a momentary loss of grasp; and all is over. There, there beneath these sweet salt waves is rest, if anywhere."

He began to dream of it, as he watched the waters swirling by the boat, or the fissure in front where the prow cut the waves, and sent the hissing sections aft: until he felt himself almost mesmerized by the element. The continuous watching of the green and white waters seemed to obliterate and confuse his sight; and with the dimness of sight came dimness of perception, until at last he began to think that he had accomplished his dread design, and that he was actually beneath the waves. Again and again the delusion returned, each time with more force, until at last reason and imagination became merged together, and the former was about to topple over even as he loosed his hold, when he was recalled to existence by the harsh voice of Ned Galwey:

"For the luv of God, yer 'anner, come down out o' dat! If you fell over, nothin' on airth could save my nick from the hangman!"

For a moment, Hamberton did not understand him. Then he laughed with grim humour, and silently sat down. Presently, he asked:

"How is that, Ned? If I toppled over, what is that to you?"

"Everything," said Ned. "On account of our dissinsions, you know, the whole say wouldn't wash me clane before a judge and jury!"

Hamberton saw the truth of the observation at once; and at once realized again the truth of Father Cosgrove's words:

"You cannot go out of life alone!"

But he said;

"It wouldn't make so much difference, Ned, to the world, if you were hanged, and I was drowned."

A remark that convinced Ned fully that the "masther was tetched in his head"; and made him doubly eager to steer for that little light that burned far away across the tumbling seas in his little cabin.

But the spell of the temptation was broken for Hamberton. He sat very still, and said no more, not even when the boat had touched the side of the pier, and both sprang ashore.

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But now, like an oft-expelled and conquered disease, that comes back with greater fury, and gathers fresh strength at each return, the terrible idea recurred more frequently, until it became an obsession. The great question now was, how to accomplish the evil design, and make the world believe it was an accident. He knew he could count on Father Cosgrove's silence. He turned over many means in his mind of meeting Death; but there was always some difficulty. He had quite abandoned the thought of a sea-death, as he saw it would certainly compromise either Ned Galwey, or any other boatman; and, if he went out alone on the sea to his death, it would be a manifest suicide.

At length, the occasion rose up with the temptation. For one evening, as he walked slowly along the edge of the sand-cliff that fronted, and was gradually fretted away by, the sea in the vicinity of the village, he saw far down beneath him some children playing. There were a few grown girls, and two or three little ones, amongst whom he recognised one for whom he had a curious affection, because her mother was an outcast from the society of men. As he passed, the child shouted up to him to come down and play with them; and the invitation from the child woke a strange dead chord in his soul, and a certain spirit of tenderness seemed to possess him. He waved back his hand, and shouted down:

"All right. I shall be down soon!"

And he went on, musing on the possibility of falling gently from the cliff, and meeting an easy death beneath. All would say it was an unhappy accident. But clearly, he dare not throw himself among those innocent children, whose lives he would thus imperil.

He walked along, thinking over the dread thought, until suddenly he heard a shout from a fishing boat in the bay, and looking around, he saw the men, who were far out, wildly gesticulating. He ran back, and watched where their fingers pointed. Then, when he came quite opposite to where the children were, he saw the danger. They were nearly surrounded by the incoming tide, for here the shore dipped suddenly, and the frothing waves came up with a hiss and a rush. The elder girls had run away, and were screaming at a safe distance; and the two little ones, one of whom was his favourite, were standing paralyzed with terror. For here there was a hollow in

the cliff, and two barriers of rock hemmed in the sands. He looked, and saw the children vainly trying to mount the jagged stones, and follow their companions. He saw them run backwards screaming, while the angry waves leaped in and swept around their feet. Forgetting Death, and now moved by the desire of saving Life, Hamberton stepped forward, and trod a narrow goat-path that ran down the side of the cliff. But the screams of the children became more importunate. He left the path, and leaped forward to a ledge of sand that seemed to slope down to the chasm where the children were imprisoned. But the impetus of the fall was too great, and he felt himself driven forward by his own weight and unable to save himself. In that perilous moment he could not help thinking:

"I have had what I desired. Yea, there is a God!" and the next moment, he was huddled up on the sands, having barely escaped involving in his own ruin that of the children he had bravely determined to save.

CHAPTER XXXVI

NEMESIS

No woman, mother or maiden, ever utterly loathes that which she has once loved. Her usually flexible nature seems to be hardened by that passion into a shape which cannot be bent backward or broken. There may be anger, jealousy, hate, under which her soul will vibrate painfully. But, at length and at last, it settles down into one fixed poise, which seems as unchangeable as the earth's axis towards the sun.

Hence, Mabel Willoughby, after her baptism of tears, took the regenerated soul of her husband unto her own, and settled down into a calm attitude of resignation and affection. The effect on Outram was almost startling. The unavowed forgiveness of his wife for his deadly deception touched unto better purposes and larger issues a spirit that had grown old in duplicity; and he came to worship, with a kind of doglike uplook, the woman whom he had betrayed and who had so nobly absolved him. Hence, during these fleeting summer and autumnal months, he lost all his cunning, all his cynicism; and went about a humble and deferential follower of his wife, asking for and obeying her commands; whilst she, in turn, seemed to regard him with a kind of respect for his misfortune and forgiven fault.

But, where men forgive, Nature, and her handmaid,

Nemesis, are sometimes relentless; and certainly, in some mysterious manner, the magnanimity of men is not imitated by that hidden and masked executioner, called Fate. And so it happened that one day, Outram, who was fleeing from Fate, fell into its arms; and expiating his sin, liberated at the same time the woman who had been his victim and pardoner together.

One autumn day, unlike autumn, however, in a strong breeze that curled the waters down in a Kerry fiord, which had also become a fashionable watering-place, a curious picture could have been seen.

There was a strong sunlight on the beach, where children were building sand-castles; and the old were sitting musing; and the young were gaily emerging from the bathing boxes for the afternoon dip in the sea. This was commonplace enough; but what relieved it was a strange figure of a girl, evidently an Oriental or a quadroon, clothed all in white, except for the red sash that bound her waist, and the red turban, with a gold tuft or crest that hardly bound her black and glossy hair. Her feet were bare, but were ringed with silver anklets. Her arms too were covered with some kind of bracelets in chased silver. And she stood motionless as a statue, except that the wind caught, from time to time, her white skirt, or her red sash, and swung it around, and threw it back again. But there, against the background of the sea, green and white, and on the level gray sands, she stood, statuesque and imposing; and many a curious eye watched her, and many a curious guess was made about her nationality and her presence in this obscure and remote place.

Just a little inkling of her position might have been given by the presence also of a lady and gentleman, who sat about twenty or thirty yards behind her on a little sand-hill where sea-thistles grew. They were both silent, sketching furiously the figure before them; and occasionally dabbing in some bright colours from a palette that lay between them.

After about three quarters of an hour, during which the white figure never stirred from its position, the lady and gentleman rose; the latter said something aloud so that the girl might hear; and instantly, just touching her turban and her black hair with her fingers with a gesture of feminine coquetry, she turned aside, and walked with a stately and dignified step towards the only hotel this remote watering-place could boast of. Many eyes followed her; many stared at her rudely; but she looked over all with a certain calm grace and dignity that made the rude and the insolent and the curious lower their gaze as she passed.

That evening, the only passengers that stepped from the stage-coach, which plied between the village and Killarney, were Outram and his wife.

They had come to spend a week or two of the closing autumnal holidays here and there on the loveliest sea-coast in the world; and Outram, who had been always fond of society and excitement, now sought the most secluded and hidden places, as if he dreaded the faces of strangers, or was jealous of aught but the companionship of his wife.

He had said to Mabel, just as they approached the hotel:

"Here we can manage, I think, a quiet week or two. I understand the season has been a poor one; and we shall be almost alone."

And he stepped from the coach with the agility of one who just then was relieved from some apprehension, and had sought and found a respite or a rest. And they were fortunate in securing the two best rooms in the hotel, — those overlooking a tiny strip of laurelled garden, over whose foliage could be seen the green wastes of the sea.

Yet, next morning after breakfast, to Mabel's intense surprise, Outram came to her and said, in a pitiful way, that closed all questioning:

"I think we had better clear out from here, Mabel. I have had a wretched night, full of all kinds of apprehensions and fears. I wish I had that ring from Maxwell."

And he looked so ill that she forbore asking questions.

The hotel proprietor was alarmed and disturbed. He had counted on such eligible guests for a fortnight at least.

"Anything wrong with the room? We can easily get you another. Perhaps, you would like your meals alone," etc.

To all which anxious interrogatories, Outram could only say:

"No, no. All is right. But —"

And they departed. Mabel mused all the way in silence, until they came to their old quarters on Caragh Lake. High up on the hills was the bell-tent of Maxwell, with the little red pennant fluttering in the breeze.

"I hope Maxwell is here," he said. "I shall demand my ring."

"He cannot be here," said Mabel, wishing it were so. "You know he's married to some English girl along the Dingle coast; and I heard they have gone abroad."

The sudden hope died away from Outram's face, and left it dark and gloomy as before.

They had rooms in the hotel; and the unhappy man, hunted by Fate, had one night's rest. But the next day he looked fearful and unhappy and apprehensive, watching in a furtive manner the guests at table or on the corridors, and hiding behind curtains when the great stage-coaches came with their burden of passengers, and went.

His wife could not help noticing it, and his dread became contagious. Both felt now the shadow of a great fear looming down on them; the meshes of Fate closing in around them. But by common consent they agreed that this fate was to be met in silence. Mabel asked no questions; and Outram proffered no suggestions.

The second day passed quietly over them, Outram having spent the greater part of it alone on the lake; and even there seeking the shadows and sequestered places rather than the open waters, where eyes, themselves unseen, might rest upon him. In the evening he was in excellent spirits, and said after dinner to his wife:

"I think, after all, Maxwell may be here. At least, I imagine I saw that young barbarian who used accompany him, and whom once, you remember, I nearly drowned at the pier. I must make inquiries."

He did. Yes! Maxwell was here for a few days' fishing, before the close of the season. He lived alone in his bell-tent up there in the valley of the hills, and saw

no one. He had been married to a great English heiress, who would now inherit untold wealth, for look! here is a paragraph in the *Sentinel* to the effect that Hugh Hamberton, Esq., J.P., Brandon Hall, was killed by a fall from a cliff in the neighbourhood of his home last Monday, whilst endeavouring to save the lives of two children who had been suddenly surrounded by the incoming tide.

"Lucky dog!" said Outram. "He was always lucky, except — when he lost you, Mabel."

And Mabel smiled sadly.

Another day rolled by, and after breakfast Outram again recurred to the matter.

"I'll go up this afternoon or to-morrow and interview him," said Outram. "It will be interesting to hear of his adventures as a farm-labourer, and I must have that ring. Will you come, Mabel? We can drive up after lunch."

And Mabel shook her head, and said nothing. Outram did not go to seek Maxwell. He spent the day again on the lake.

After dinner that evening, he strolled through the grounds of the hotel, smoking, and seeking, as was now his wont, seclusion in the deep thickets and shrubberies that almost made night of day in the place. He seemed to have no fear now, as he walked in deepest solitude to and fro, thinking, thinking of many things, and yearning for that strange talisman to which he attached such superstitious importance. The day was declining; but red clouds hung in masses above his head.

Once, as he was turning in his walks, he thought he saw a glint of colour amongst the trees; but concluded that it

was a mistake; and he gave himself up again to imagination, ending each strophe of his fancy by wishing he had that ring once more in his possession. He despised himself for attaching such importance to so paltry a thing; but a spell was upon him, which he could not shake aside.

Suddenly, a low voice, scarcely raised above a whisper, broke on his startled ears, and made his heart stand still in terror. It came from behind the thick bole of a huge sycamore, and was chaunting as if in a soliloquy the following words in Sanskrit:

"Salutations to thee, O my Father! Salutations to thee, O thou giver of boons! Why hast thou hidden thy face from thy slave, and made night of her life? Behold Bráhma has brought me to thee across seas and mountains. I have found thee; and shall not let thee go!"

Outram stood still as one suddenly paralyzed. The voice of the girl went on in a similar dreary, moaning recitative, relating her love for her benefactor, her pursuit of him through India and Europe, and hither; her protestation of fidelity, her determination never to leave him again. Well he knew the terrible scorn and irony that were beneath her words; and her grim purpose that he should not escape her. He thought to fly; but knew at once that she would follow him, and reach him in unexpected places. There was nothing for it but to face at once his evil genius, and ask her what she required.

He waited for a moment to steady his nerves, threw away his cigar, and stood opposite the girl.

She seemed to be taken aback for a moment; but looked at him with that air of deprecation and that moistening of the eyelids that he knew well concealed a purpose not

to be shaken — a character not to be angered or frightened — a grim resolution to follow, and follow, and follow to the end.

"Sátára!" he said sternly, and as if asking a question.

"Yes, my Lord! Your slave and bondswoman!"

She held her hands hanging down clasped before her, and her great eyes wandered over his face.

"What has brought you hither? Why have you come to disturb my peace?"

"Why does the moon hang round her mother, Earth?" she replied in the same calm monotone. "Why do the rivers run to the sea? Why do the tides come and go at a secret biddance?"

"Yes, yes," he said impatiently. "I know all that jargon. But what do you want? I have but little money —" he put his hand in his pocket, and drew out some loose silver, — "and cannot promise you more. You have a situation, have you not? I saw you with some persons over there at Waterville."

She put aside the money proffered, gently, but with some disdain, and looked at him with brimming eyes.

He got angry at this. It was an unreasonable thing, and therefore an invincible thing.

"You know I'm married," he said, "and you should also know that the past is past, and to be forgotten utterly; that European ways are not the same as those of India; and that I cannot allow you to follow me here!"

"My Lord is angry with his servant," she said. "What has his servant done to create anger? The past is not past; for there is no past nor future for the children of Bráhma, the Eternal."

She waved her hand, as if to brush away any objection.

"Look here, Sátára," he said, "that jargon is all right beyond the Red Sea. But we cannot listen to it here. Again, I tell you that this is Europe; and that our ways are not yours. You cannot come into my house. That's impossible. I cannot receive you. Why can't you remain as you are? Are the people kind to you?"

"Kind? Yes. But they are also kind to their dog. What is kindness? Will the gleaner take an ear of corn when he can get a sheaf? Will my lord drink water when he can have the grape-juice of the vineyard?"

Outram was sorely puzzled what to do. How to get rid of this girl with her brimming eyes, her deadly and tenacious purpose, her Eastern fanaticism, he knew not.

"Sátára," he said, lowering and softening his voice, until it became almost caressing, "you once cared for me? We were once friends?"

"Nay, nay," she said, "not friends. The slave is not the friend of her master; the worshipper is not the friend of Bráhma."

He saw it was useless. But now the evening had deepened down. The lights were twinkling in the hotel beyond. He must soon return; and — with such a companion! He made a final effort.

"Come!" he said, and he led the way through the shrubbery by a by-path down to the pier, where the little punt was moored.

When the girl, walking by his side, saw him unloose the boat, and invite her towards it, she stepped back. But he used gentle words of command, and represented

to her that here alone could there be the solitude necessary for the explanations that he deemed it necessary to give, because she was so slow to understand. Yet she was fearful; and watched him with her large eyes open, and studying every feature and play of his face to see what was his design.

At last, impatiently he coiled up the rope in the boat, and sitting down, drew away from the pier. Then, in despair, at the thought of his escaping her, she cried to him, and stretched out her hands. He drew back gently; and gently helped her into the boat. Then when she had seated herself he pulled out into the lake. A wet and smoky half-moon rose in the south, and threw its silver over tree and lake and mountain; and the white dress of the girl shone above the darkling waters beneath. The clouds, now a dark slate-colour, hung threateningly downwards; and certain black pines, like watching sentinels, signalled to each other across the lake.

Darby Leary, in the free hour after his master's dinner, had come down to the lake, and, with the view of catching a few trout or pike for Noney, had set his night-lines amongst the sedges, and was calmly enjoying the fragrance of a cigarette. He had now advanced beyond brown paper, and could smoke as many deadly cigarettes as his master. Once, unfortunately, he had the chance of a cigar; and this ruined his taste; so that, under the influence of that experience, there was always a little contempt and sense of disappointment under the more modest and less dangerous cigarette. But Darby was not one to quarrel with fate. He took his pleasures as

they came; and only dreamed sometimes of better things He lay coiled up in a bunch of heather and ferns, and was sinking into a kind of delightful coma, when the hollow sound of the sea and the light splash of water aroused him.

"Who the d——," thought Darby, "could be out at this hour except a poacher like meself? The gintry are at their dinner. I hope they won't pull up my night-lines."

He drew further back, took the cigarette from his mouth, lest the smoke should betray him, and watched. Presently, he saw clearly in the moonlight, about a hundred yards from shore, the white glint of a lady's dress, and then the dark form before her, leaning forward and backward at the push and draw of the oars. A breeze sprang up, and curled the waters of the lake, blurring the shadow of the woman's dress, and swinging the tree-tops above Darby's head.

"I didn't like the look of the sky to-night," thought Darby, "If I were thim, I'd go home."

And then he saw the punt draw into the shadows, and she stood still, swaying and rocking on the light waves. Darby leaned down his head trying to catch a word of the conversation. Not a sound reached him; but he saw clearly the man gesticulating, and once a little scream from the woman crossed the waters, as she clutched the edge of the boat, when it rocked too wildly.

"They're gintry, begobs," thought Darby. "But what a quare thing to come out on sich a night. They have their own ways, like common people; and I misdoubt but that there's some mischief there."

This made him think of his own little wife at home; and he couldn't help saying:

"Ah, Noney, sure 'tis you're the jewel intirely."

A half-hour passed by. The breeze died out, sprang up again in fiercer gusts, died away again, and then swept down in a hurricane that threw seething waves at Darby's feet.

"Begobs, I must warn them," thought Darby. "If they don't shtop their cnofshaulin' and codraulin', they'll be cool enough before morning, I'm thinkin'!"

He put his hands to his mouth, and shouted across the tumbling waters:

"There's a big wind comin' down; an' ye'll get swamped."

Apparently, they didn't hear him. He again shouted, in a superior accent, borrowed for the occasion:

"Hallo, there, in the punt!"

A faint Hallo! came back.

"They're dhrunk, or mad," thought Darby.

"Get home out o' dat," said Darby, again shouting through his hands. "Don't you see the wather? Cull in, or ye'll be drownded!"

This at last seemed to awaken the rower; for he drew his punt around, and pulled shorewards.

But when he got out of the sheltered waters, and found the boat rocking dangerously, he tried to get back. But this was not easy.

"Keep her head to the north," shouted Darby, "and pull in here."

The rower, now alarmed, tried to do so; and with a few

strong pulls he sent the punt driving through the seething waters. But wind and wave were too much for him. These autumn tempests, which rise so suddenly on mountain lakes, and as suddenly subside, raise dangerous and choppy waves, in which very often six-and eight-oared boats perish. The light punt had no chance there, although just now driven by a man rendered desperate by a double terror. He struggled furiously, feeling that his only chance was to cut through the waters, and not to leave the frail little skiff at their mercy for an instant. But Nature and, as he now thought, Nemesis, were too much. The thought of this girl, who had travelled half the globe to avenge his desertion or cruelty, and the thought that his talisman would now have been in his possession, had he not neglected the opportunity, smote him together; and with a kind of groan, or cry of despair, he threw up the oars, and folded his arms in defiance. In an instant the boat was swung round, lifted up, and capsized; and Outram and the girl were in the trough of the waves.

He made no attempt to save himself or her. He flung up his hands, and went down like lead. Sátára's dress kept her floating even on the turbulent waves for a while; but her courage too was departing, and she was beginning to see Fate in the coincidence of meeting Outram and her death, when a rough form clove through the waves, and a rough voice shouted, whilst he spat the water from his mouth:

"Hould on; an — for — the life — of ye — don't ketch me!"

With her Eastern stoicism, she complied.

"Now," spluttered Darby, "jest lay yer hand — on me — shoulder — but don't ketch me for yer life."

She calmly obeyed him; and Darby towed the girl ashore.

When he had pulled her up amongst the sedge, and set her on her feet, and got back his breath, he was the most thunder-stricken man on this planet. The dark face, the black hair now tossed wildly down on breast and shoulders, the white dress and red sash, completely bothered him. She stood panting, and staring at him, and then got breath to say:

"Tank you! Ver' much tanks!" and strode away, leaving little rivers of water as she moved.

Darby was too much surprised to follow, or ask a question. He went home to dry himself, and in reply to the astonished queries of his little wife, he only said mysteriously:

"The quarest thing ye ever hard. But whisht, till I see the Masther!"

CHAPTER XXXVII

AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY

WHEN Darby did see the "masther," he wrapped himself up in that cloak of mystery that used to be exasperating, but was now only amusing to Maxwell. He had learned much, and profited wisely.

"Where were you last evening, Darby?" he said. "You never returned home after dinner."

"Sich a thing!" said Darby.

"I suppose the attractions of home life and Noney are too much for you?" said Maxwell.

"The quarest thing yer 'anner ivir hard of," said Darby.

"Well, I'll dock you a quarter's wages in future if you don't mind your business," said Maxwell.

Thus recalled to practical life, Darby commenced his narrative.

"I wos goin' down the hill," said he, "sayin' me prayers, bekase Noney do be complaining that I do be so long at 'em that I keeps the supper cooling, whin, lo! and behold you, I saw the punt on the lake. 'Who the divil are out coolin' their selves at this hour of night?' sez I to meself. 'They must be the quare people out an' out to be boatin' at sich an hour.' So I watched 'em; an' begobs I airned me watchin' well."

Maxwell grew attentive. It was so like something he had formerly seen, and which had changed the whole course of his life.

"Here!" he said, flinging a cigarette to Darby, who now got into the full swing of his narrative.

"There wos a lady an' gintleman, he pullin' an' she steerin' the boat, ontil they got out of the rough wathers and pulled into the shallows where we hooked the salmon."

Maxwell nodded.

"Well, there they wor, talkin' an' codraulin', an' they nivir see the wind comin' down from the hills, and risin' the lake like mad. Thin I halloed to 'em; an' they didn't hear me, they wor so occupied wit' aitch other. I halloed agin. Thin, the jintleman saw his danger; an' he pulled out. But the wind was too much for him, and the wathers wor too shtrong. Have you a light about, you yer 'anner?" he cried, suddenly stopping, and addressing Maxwell.

Maxwell flung him a box of wax vestas, and waited. He knew from experience there was no use in hurrying Darby.

Darby smoked placidly; and then resumed, pausing between each puff of smoke.

"But, begobs, he could handle the oar well. 'Twas a pity, out an' out . . . I tould him hould her head to the says . . . for she was bobbin' like a cork . . . An' he did . . . But thin . . . a gusht of wind as from a smith's bellows . . . hit him . . . an' he flung up his hands . . . an' wint down like a cannon-ball."

Maxwell had to wait a long time; but he was afraid to shew much impatience or interest.

"The lady floated just like a wather-lily with her white gownd spreadin' out all round her . . . And begobs, I couldn't help it . . . in I went, clothes an' all, more

betoken . . . I got the divil an' all of an atin' from Noney about them . . . an' shwam to her . . . Begor, she was as cool as a cucummber . . . bobbin' up an' down . . . 'Hould up,' sez I, 'an' don't tetch me fer the life of ye' . . . bekase, these wimmen put the *glaum* on you, whin they're drownin' . . . an' pull you down wid 'em . . . But, begobs . . . this wan puts her hand . . . on me showlder . . . as cool as if we wor goin' out for a dance . . an' I pulled her safe and sound . . . from the wathers."

Maxwell was now almost excited; but he dared not say a word; and after a long pause for admiration, Darby resumed:

"Thin kem the quarest thing of all . . . bekase . . . when I confronted her . . . I saw . . . that av it wasn't the Ould Bye himself in the shape av a woman . . . an' they say he appears that way sometimes . . . it was the Ould Bye's wife . . . She wos as black as the ace of shpades . . . she had big gowld rings in her ears, an' on her arrums. 'Tank you,' sez she, 'tank you very kindly,' and off she walked, like the Queen of Shayba . . . You could knock me down wid a fedder!"

"You must get a leather medal for this, Darby," said Maxwell. "Only you're after telling a damned pack of lies. You were poaching, you ruffian, and you fell in."

"Pon me sowkins," said Darby. "An' more betoken, I tink —"

He stopped suddenly.

"What do you think?" asked Maxwell, impatiently.

"I think," said Darby, "but I ain't sure and sartin,

that the gintleman wos the same as give me a cowld bath in the lake before. His turrn have come now."

Maxwell jumped up.

"Outram? Do you mean Mr. Outram?"

"Begor, I don't know his name or address," said Darby. "But I think 'twas the same."

"Why? What makes you think so? You couldn't see him?" asked Maxwell.

"The moon wos shinin'," said Darby, "but that 'ud make no differ. But I think 'twas the way he dhrew himself back and forrard. I knew his shtroke; an' a good shtrong shtroke he had."

"And the woman? The lady? You never saw her before?"

"Oh, begor, no! I can take me Bible Oath on that," said Darby. "If she wasn't a furriner, or a wild Injun, she blackened her face a purpose."

The thought was opportune; and struck Maxwell silent, although he still but half believed all that his henchman said. He said at length:

"How many have you told of this affair?"

"Divil a wan, but yer 'anner!" said Darby.

"Not even Noney?"

"Oyeh, ketch me! You can't tell the thruth to a 'uman. You'd never hear the ind of it."

"You're quite sure?"

"Shure and sartin," said Darby.

"Then keep it close," said Maxwell. "If all you say is true, there's a mystery somewhere, and you may get involved. By the way, did you ever tell anyone about the ducking Outram gave you?"

"Divil a wan," said Darby. "Oyeh, what am I sayin'? Yarra, sure I tould half the parish; and tould 'em too that I'd be even wid him wan day."

"Precisely. Now, take care, and keep a silent tongue in your head; or that may come against you. Many a man has been hanged for less."

And Maxwell knew that he had closed Darby's tongue on that subject for ever.

He called down to the hotel in the afternoon, inquired and found that Outram and Mabel were registered as guests, asked to see them, and saw Mabel alone.

She was anxious and terrified enough; and made no secret of the cause. Outram had dined, and gone out and had not been seen since. He had been much frightened and disturbed these last days, — why, Mabel could not conjecture. He had been anxious to change from place to place; and appeared to be haunted by some fear; and she didn't know. She feared to utter what she thought.

The hotel was in commotion. The shadow of a great fear was over the place. Something had happened. There was one being at least in terrible distress; and she the proudest and haughtiest, who would not deign to speak to anyone. It was interesting, and the guests gathered here and there in little knots and nooks, and whispered, and pointed, and conjectured, as is the way with these creatures, when one of their class is in trouble.

Then a search-party was organized, with Maxwell at their head. And they had not gone far when they found the shattered punt amongst the sedges that lined

the lake, and later on, the oars floating, and later on, a man's felt hat, which was unquestionably Outram's. And Maxwell had to tell Mabel the sad news there in the very portico of the hotel, where barely twelve months ago Outram was showing his talisman to an admiring group, and he himself knew that it was all over between himself and his fair cousin for ever.

He was uttering the usual commonplaces, "the vacant chaff well meant for grain," that are said on such occasions, when a lady appeared, and just behind her came a perambulator, pushed by a dark young girl, clothed in white but for a red sash around her waist, and a red fillet in her hair. The lady stopped to speak a word of sympathy to Mabel; the perambulator stopped also; and Maxwell had an opportunity of studying the dark, immobile features of Sátára. The girl looked around her in a cool, impassive way, resting her great eyes solemnly on Mabel, and just glancing incuriously at Maxwell. He was so absorbed in his study of her that he was quite oblivious of the conversation between the ladies, until he heard the words:

"Yes! it was a sudden and dangerous squall. My ayah was out also for a walk, and came home drenched. I feared she would be ill, as she is not used to this changeable climate."

Sátára smiled, showing her white teeth, and passed on with the perambulator.

"Who are these?" asked Maxwell.

"Anglo-Indians," said Mabel, with a little shudder. "They came on here only yesterday."

"And that is a native, I suppose?" he asked.

"Yes. A native nurse, who has become attached to them."

"I suppose you will return home at once, Mabel," he said kindly. "I fear there is but little use in your remaining here."

"I should like to remain," she said, "while there is still a little hope."

He was silent.

After a pause, she said:

"Ralph was about to visit you yesterday afternoon, partly in courtesy, partly on business. Can you imagine what it was?"

"I suppose about that wretched ring. Outram attached a superstitious importance to the thing."

"I wonder would it have saved him?" she said musingly. "He often said: 'I wish to have it back! I wish I had it back! I should not have parted with it.'"

"I don't know!" said her cousin. "Perhaps I should have sent it to him. It was useless to me. But you know, Mabel, he had a way of setting you up against him by the manner in which he asked, or demanded a favour. He was so peremptory. I suppose it was his Indian training."

"I suppose so," she said meekly.

"Well, in case you decide to leave for home, that is when you are assured that all hope is abandoned, you'll send for me, won't you?"

"Certainly. I shall claim your help."

Then, after a pause:

"I haven't asked after your wife. She's well?"

"Yes, indeed. But I haven't heard for a few days."

"Then, there was no truth in the newspaper report about your father-in-law?"

"What?" he cried. "What report?"

"I shouldn't have mentioned it. But there was a paragraph a day or two ago in the paper that Mr. Hamberton — is that the name — was killed in a heroic attempt to save some children from drowning!"

"My God! I never heard it. This comes from my hatred of newspapers. What paper was it, Mabel? Wonder Claire never wrote me."

"I think it was some local paper," she replied. "I'm sorry I told you. There seems to be some Fate pursuing us."

Horrified at the thought of Hamberton's death, Maxwell soon forget all about Outram. He had to make his own preparations for leaving immediately for home; and gave orders to have his tent struck, and all arrangements made for departure.

All that weary day, Mabel kept her room, venturing out but once or twice to see a messenger, take a telegram, or send a message to her father. She was quite prepared to see in the catastrophe the hand of Fate. It did not come quite unexpected. Strange histories end strangely; and a career of duplicity, if not of crime, could only terminate consistently in a weird and tragic manner. Yet the new-born love that Mabel bore towards her husband made his unhappy death doubly painful. The woman's soul was disappointed of its ambition to consecrate and make happy a life that she had rescued from worse than death. It was a sense, therefore, of noble sadness that

weighed her down, a sense of lost opportunities, — of a life, which she might have ennobled, just snatched from her hand by Death. Fortunately, she thought, it was all natural and honourable. Outram had not gone down in disgrace, nor by his own hand, nor under dark circumstances. A sudden mountain squall, unforeseen and unimagined; a frail boat; and that was all. At least, the lynx eyes of society could see nothing there. There could be no room for scorn in the pity that met her from so many eyes.

One thing seemed to embarrass her, as the evil day wore on towards night. She found that she never left her room but that dark Indian girl was somewhere in her path. In the corridor, on the stairs, everywhere she went, there was that strange girl, sometimes playing with the children, sometimes alone and crooning some old Indian rhyme about her gods; sometimes knitting, as those dreadful *tricoteuses* on their three-legged stools under the guillotine in the Terror; but always there, and always rolling round her great eyes, and letting them fall and burn on the white, beautiful face that was trying to conceal its grief. During the day, Mabel became gradually uneasy. Towards night, she became fascinated and alarmed. She didn't know what to make of it. Once, in the course of the evening, she was coming down the stairs as Sátára was going up. The latter stood aside and stared. A strong light fell from a window on the face of the girl. Mabel noticed that she looked old, strangely old, — that she was a woman, although at a distance she seemed hardly more than a child. And there was always that strange, inquiring, half-triumphant stare as of one

who could be despised, but could not be put aside; as of one who seemed to claim a co-partnership in the agony of the woman, although her position would not allow her to presume to express it.

As the evening advanced towards night, the idea sprang up in Mabel's mind that in some mysterious manner this girl was connected with her husband's death; and it was almost with a gasp of pain that she remembered the words: "My ayah, too, was out for a walk, and came home drenched."

What could take that girl, who shivered under the sunshine, out under the evening's chills?

But then the idea of connecting her husband with this Indian servant was preposterous; and Mabel began to fear that, owing to sleeplessness and anxiety, perhaps her own imagination was conquering her reason. But there is that curious subter-reason, or intuition, or whatever you wish to call it, in some minds that anticipates all kinds of revelations, and jumps at its own conclusions with a sure and certain foot. And Mabel could not shake aside the fear that, if the mystery of her husband's death were ever unravelled, it would be found that this girl was not altogether unconnected with it.

Haunted by the thought, she was proceeding slowly upstairs, just about eleven o'clock, as the oil-lamps in the hotel-corridor were about to be extinguished, when, on turning a narrow step, she almost stumbled against the girl. She drew back with a certain loathing, which the girl was not slow to notice; and just then a door opened on the next corridor, and a lady's voice cried, in a suppressed way:

"Sátára! Sátára! be quick! The lights are being put out; and you must make your way back in the darkness!"

Mabel clutched the balustrade with one hand; and placed the other over her beating heart. The girl saw the gesture and smiled, showing her white teeth, and also two deep lines around the mouth, which made her, to Mabel's eyes, an old and haggard witch.

She had barely strength to reach her room, and fling herself, in a kind of paralysis of fear, on an arm-chair.

The next morning, Maxwell had a tiny note to say that his cousin had all preparations made for her journey to Killarney to catch the up-mail to Dublin. He promptly obeyed the summons, as all his arrangements had been made, merely warning Darby that, as he valued his life and his future prosperity, he should keep a closed mouth about all that he had witnessed.

They travelled by the stage-coach to Killarney, scarcely exchanging a word by the way. And without a word Maxwell saw his cousin into her compartment, provided all necessaries for her personal comfort, ordered dinner at 6 P.M. in the dining-car, etc. Then, as he said good-bye, his eyes lingered a moment on the stony, impassive face. He was not surprised to see the tears silently gather and fall. And he knew that the tears of a proud woman are tragic tears.

They never met again.

After a few weeks of suffering, and longing once more to see the face of "Bob," "Poor Bob," the old Major, half-petrified, was gathered unto his rest.

Mabel went abroad. And, sometimes, in the great hotels at Vevey, Montreux, Cap Martin, etc., the guests amused themselves by watching the stately, silent figure of the girl, whose hair was prematurely gray, and who walked so silently and gravely from the dining-room, never exchanging a word with themselves. And it helped to pass pleasantly the winter evenings, when someone proposed, as a kind of charade, the conjecture as to whether she "had a story."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"QUASI PER IGNEM"

HUGH HAMBERTON was not killed by his fall from the cliff. But when the fishermen, who had pulled in furiously to save the children, had leaped from their boat, and placed the girls in safety, they found much trouble in raising him from the waters that now were seething around him. He was quite unconscious; and all that they could do was to raise him up, and take him beyond the reach of the waves, until his carriage would arrive from Brandon Hall. But they lifted him tenderly and reverently, as a hero, who had probably given his life to save little children from a terrible death.

And when the news of the event had reached the village, all hands struck work, and hastened to assist in every way the brave man who was now, and for evermore, enshrined in their hearts. Around the cottage fireside for many a night, the tale was told, and every circumstance gone over again and again, as the custom is amongst this story-loving people — the call of the child to come down and play, the cheery response of the grave Englishman, whom no adult dare approach or address without deference, the cry of the fisherman, the screams of the girls, the gallant manner in which Hamberton had attempted to rescue them, his fall, etc., all were narrated with some poetical exaggeration that only enhanced his reputation, and sent it far and wide.

Claire Maxwell was terribly shocked and grieved; but kept her feelings to herself under an appearance of calm composure. She would have written or wired to her husband; but waited to obtain the doctor's verdict. That was soon ascertained. No danger to life, but probably hopeless paralysis from spinal injury. It was terrible, but it might be worse; and then — it was noble, as of wounds taken in battle in some glorious, if impossible, enterprise.

After some days, Maxwell returned, and Hamberton recovered consciousness. For some time his recollection of things was hazy; then the whole succession of ideas and events ranged themselves solemnly before him, and gave him much food for thought during the weary hours that dragged themselves along through the sick man's chamber.

Father Cosgrove was one of the first to call and offer his sympathies. He was elated at the idea that his friend, who was always denying and protesting against Father Cosgrove's estimate of him, had betrayed his own better self in this glorious manner. Father Cosgrove had preached to his own congregation a sermon on the event, taking for his text:

"Greater proof of love no man can give, than that a man should lay down his life for his friend."

And he drew tears from the eyes of his people by his picture of the glorious unselfishness of this man, rich, powerful, and with all the accessories of happiness at his disposal, sacrificing all freely to save the lives of little children. And a mighty torrent of love and admiration surged around the lonely couch in Brandon Hall, where

the invalid was now and for many a long day to be imprisoned.

The interview between Father Cosgrove and his friend was very touching. They silently grasped each other's hands, and said but little; the little on Hamberton's part being a deprecation of all the popular applause and tumult about nothing.

"Look here," he feebly stammered, holding up the many newspaper notices that had been written about him, "see what fools men can make of themselves. Now, there is how reputations are made. It is the entirely hopeless imbecility of men — the eternal tomfoolery of the world."

But Father Cosgrove would only shake his head.

"I'm sure now," Hamberton would continue, "if all the great names and great deeds of the world were examined, it would be as easy to prick the air-bubbles as this. No one knows a man but himself; and unless he is a fool no one has such a poor opinion of a man as himself."

"That is quite right!" Father Cosgrove would say. "That is what all our saints are never tired of repeating."

"Pah! I don't want your saints with their fastings, and haircloth, and nonsense! It is common sense! The confessional of every honest man is his own bedroom and his looking-glass. There he admits everything to himself; and a sorry estimate he makes of his little godhead."

"You are incorrigible!" his friend would say. "But you are a hero! Nothing now can change that."

"Even *you* do not know me," Hamberton would reply

in a kind of despair. "Look, some day I'll command you to tell the truth to the world. I can't stand this horrible mask of hypocrisy."

But one day, after he had railed at everything and everybody in this way, just as Father Cosgrove was leaving the room, he called him back, and said:

"Don't be too proud at what I'm going to say."

Then, after a pause, he added:

"After all, *there is a God!*"

When the first shock was over, and all that medical skill could effect, was done for Hamberton, Maxwell thought the time had come when he might visit his old friends at Lisheen. He was safe now. The report of his munificence and generosity towards these poor people had been wafted far and wide; and by degrees, the imagination of the people, so slow to disentangle itself from its preconceived ideas, began to revolve around and finally settle down on the fact that verily, and indeed, and without doubt, Robert Maxwell, Esq., was the man who had served as swineherd and labourer in their midst; and this for the noble and humane purpose of ascertaining their condition with a view to its betterment. It was like a fresh dawn of hope in the growing dusk of a nation's despair; for as yet the many acts of the legislature, that have revolutionized the condition of the tenant farmers of Ireland, had not been placed on the statute-book.

If Maxwell were one of those dwarfed souls that love popular applause, and the sound of futile drums and still more futile cheering, he could have had an ovation that would have made any of the leading politicians green

with envy. But he shrank from such things as indelicate and somewhat absurd; and he felt even a kind of shyness at the thought that he would have to face these poor people, and receive their honest thanks.

They had seen that everything that could conduce to the comfort and ease the loneliness of the poor invalid had been done, and in a quiet hour of a still autumn afternoon Claire and Maxwell drove over, after luncheon, to Lisheen.

They chose the road which Maxwell had travelled the night that he quitted in shame and remorse the humble roof that had given him shelter; and as they went he pointed out to his wife the places where he had stopped, the thoughts that passed through his mind; the very spot where he was going to throw all up in despair, and creep in amidst the bracken, and lie down and die; the lake that glinted in the starlight, the river that murmured on his right hand and directed his course, the labourer's cottage where he had obtained a little food. It is a pleasant thing in prosperity to retrace the footsteps of adversity, and recall, with all the delight of the contrast, the mournful thoughts that seemed to mark these footsteps in blood.

It was five o'clock when they turned in from the main road, and drove slowly up along the boreen that led to the dwelling-house, Maxwell still pointing out each spot with its own association.

"I can tell you I was footsore and weary and hungry enough the evening I came along here," he said, "and I had received so many rebuffs that I thought the dog would be set loose on me here. Look, there I lay

down to gather myself together, and pluck up a little courage."

They reached the yard; and a great brown collie came out to challenge them, and demand their business.

Maxwell whistled, and the angry dog came whining and whimpering and fawning upon him.

"You remain here a moment, Claire," he said, dismounting, "I should like to enter alone."

Claire remained on the trap, holding the reins loosely, and Maxwell entered with the old salutation:

"God save all here!"

Exactly the same as twelve months ago, there was no one there but the old vanithee, and she was crouching half-asleep over the wood and turf-fire, that was now dying down into white ashes, although the pungent fragrance of it filled the entire kitchen.

"God save you kindly!" she said, rising up, with that air and tone of respectful welcome that belong to these Irish homes.

"Where's Owen, and Pierry, and Debbie?" he asked, coming near.

"Wisha, thin, yer 'anner, I suppose they're up among the praties still. The days are drawin' in, an' they must hurry."

"You don't know me?" he said, anxious to break the spell of mystery that hung around him.

"Wisha, thin, yer 'anner," she replied, peering closely at him through the dusk of the kitchen, "you have the advantage of me, but sure you're welcome, whoever you are!"

"You said the same words twelve months ago to a poor tramp that came to your door?" he said.

"I did thin; an' sure 'twas God brought him our way; and sure 'twas well he repaid us!"

"'Tis a quare thing," he replied, dropping into the country *patois*, "that a man could be six months under your roof, and that you don't recognise him!"

"Oh, holy mother o' God! An' it's yer 'anner that's shpakin' to me? Oh, wisha, thin, a thousand welcomes; and 'tis well you deserve it, for shure all we have is yours."

And rubbing her hand in her check apron, she timidly held it out to him.

He grasped it in his own; and something like a sob came into his voice, as he said:

"You were more than a mother to me! And how could I forget it for you? But run out, and call in Owen and Debbie and Pierry. My wife is here in the yard."

She went out, set the great dog barking; and shouted with her feeble voice to the workers. One by one they dropped in, Debbie first.

The girl drew back the moment she saw Claire in the trap, and would have run away, but it was too late. When she entered the cottage, she flushed crimson, and then turned deadly pale when Maxwell held out his hand. She barely touched it with her fingers, holding her head aside; but he grasped her hand firmly, and said:

"Now, Debbie, we must be friends again. I am not going to forget so easily all that you did for me, when I needed it most."

The strong, fierce pride of the girl kept her silent. She found it impossible to conquer her rage at the thought

that they should be under such supreme obligations to him. She disengaged her hand, and went and hid herself in her bedroom.

When Owen and Pierry came in, the former greeted Maxwell with that air of humble deference that showed how wide he deemed the gulf that separated them. And the remembrance of his rude words the evening of the eviction was a perpetual source of remorse.

"I suppose," he said, in the tone of exaggeration that seemed to him most fit to express his feelings, "if we lived for ever and ever, we could never thank yer 'anner enough for what you done for us!"

"Don't speak of it now," said Maxwell. "But, look here, Mrs. McAuliffe, will you put down the kettle, and let us have a cup of tea after our long drive? And Pierry, run out and put up the pony, and let Mrs. Maxwell come in."

This broke the ice completely. The appeal to the old woman's hospitality touched her deeply, and she said, bustling about:

"Yerra, thin, yer 'anner, with a heart an' a half I'll get you the tay; an' if the missus 'ud come in —"

"She's coming," Maxwell said. "And, look here, get some slices of your own home-made bread — no one can make bread like you — I often told my wife so; and some of your salt butter. We are as hungry as wolves; and we have a long drive before us."

And Pierry went out, and handed down, like a gentleman, the lady from her trap; and, when the tea was ready, the two, Maxwell and his wife, sat down and talked and talked and talked; and asked questions all about the

farm, and the crops, and the cattle, and wanted to know what else could be done?

"Done? Oh, Lord, what else would we want, if we didn't want the wurrld?" said Owen. "Sure, sometimes, we say 'tis all a dhrame; an' somebody has put the comether on us. And thin we have to go out an' see everythin' agin all over — the new house, the barns, the shtock, the crops, the walls an' hedges an' ditches; an' thin we comes back to go on our knees and thank the Lord and ax him to pour down blessings on yer 'anner an' on yer 'anner's wife all the days of yere lives."

And so with all mute and spoken deference and gratitude, these poor people poured out their souls to their benefactor; and Maxwell felt that he had been more than amply recompensed for his outlay, just as he felt that he had grown in all mental and moral stature by reason of the sharp experience he had passed through there in that humble home.

"I suppose I could hardly keep it up," he thought, "nor would I care to repeat it. But it was a gift of the gods. I feel that I am moving on higher levels now."

The one drawback was Debbie's stubborn refusal to make friends. And yet Maxwell was not sorry. He pitied the girl; but he knew well that far down beneath her rustic rudeness and apparent dislike was the misplaced love for himself.

"Only one thing is wanting now to your happiness," said Maxwell, as they rose to go, "you must get Pierry here married as soon as possible. No house is rightly blessed unless the faces of little children are there. Isn't that true, Owen?"

"'Tis thrue, yer 'anner; and I begs and prays the Almighty to bless our ould age with the sight of young faces. But," — he dropped his voice to a whisper, and pointed with his thumb to the room where Debbie was hiding, "she's thinkin' of goin' over to her sisters in America in the spring; and thin —"

"I don't like that American business at all," said Maxwell, angrily. "Why can't Debbie come over to us, and we'll settle her there for life?"

The old people shook their heads. They knew better.

Pierry had got out the trap, and was stroking down the pony and handling the fresh brown harness with all an Irish boy's love for such things, and they were instantly getting under way.

The old man came out to say good-bye, but drew Maxwell aside. Then gulping down his emotion and nervousness, he said:

"I said a hasty word to yer 'anner the day of the eviction. God knows it is breakin' me heart, night an' day, since, an sometimes I can't shut me eyes on account of it — Av' yer 'anner could manage to forget —"

"Now, look here, Owen," said Maxwell, grasping the rough, horny hand, "if I hear any more of that nonsense, I'll recall all that I have done for you. Don't I know what a hasty word is as well as any man? and to tell the truth I gave reason enough for it. Here, come and say good-bye to my wife. Pierry, my boy, I have someone in my eye for you. It must not go beyond Shrove at any cost!"

"All right, yer 'anner; God bless you!" said Pierry.

Then, in his unbounded admiration of the trap and harness and pony, he subjoined:

"Isn't she a beauty?"

They drove merrily homewards, chatting gaily, about the people, their ways, their gratitude, their trials. Their hearts were light, because they had the consciousness of having done noble work. Every sacrifice for humanity reaps its reward even in this world.

"What utter and unforgivable idiots we Irish landlords have been!" said Maxwell. "Here, at our feet, were the most loyal, generous, faithful people on earth, who would follow us to death with joy. And we have trampled them into sullen and disloyal slaves, with hate and vengeance storming their hearts against us. Talk of 'lost opportunities.' We have flung to the winds our dearest interests, — our country, our race, our happiness!"

"Is it too late?" asked Claire.

"Yes," her husband said, "in the sense that things never now can be what they might have been. But there may be a chance of redress as yet. The people are forgiving and generous. But can the leopard change his spots?"

They had mounted the hill, beneath which the lake shone in the starlight, and the river ran down to the sea, when Claire suddenly started, and pointing to the horizon, said:

"That cannot be the rising moon, down there in the southwest. I have been watching it for a few minutes, and it seems not to change."

"'Tis a big blaze," said Maxwell, alarmed, pushing on the pony.

"It seems in the direction of Cahercon," she said.

"No, it is more southward," he said, though he did not believe it. "I expect some farmer's rick is on fire. Those threshing machines sometimes throw out sparks, and are dangerous."

But he whipped the pony onward; and with eyes fixed on the far-off blaze, which showed so terribly against the darkness of the night, they both fell into silence. When they dipped into the valley, the hills shut out the view of the fire. But in a quarter of an hour they reached the level plain again; and soon perceived to their horror that it was not a rick of hay or straw, but houses, perhaps the whole village of Cahercon that was being wiped out by the terrible element.

CHAPTER XXXIX

"ONE OF US?"

WHEN Maxwell and his wife turned the corner of the road leading to the village, the full horror burst upon them. Brandon Hall was in flames. The roof had fallen in; and the fierce fires were leaping up amidst the vast clouds of lurid smoke, which they turned into blood-red shadows that came and went, as the wind shifted the dense black volumes that poured fiercely as from the mouth of a furnace. With aching hearts and darkest forebodings of evil they tore madly through the village street; and when Maxwell pulled up, and threw back his pony on his haunches, the animal was covered with the white foam of its sweat. He flung the reins carelessly aside, jumped down, and tore his way through the helpless and wondering peasantry. He was afraid to ask the question that was on his lips, as he came in front of the mansion, and saw that it was gutted from roof to cellar, and that only the walls were standing. But he was swiftly answered:

"He's all right, sir! The masther is all right! He's up at Donegan's Cottage! Ned Galwey saved him!"

Thus reassured he ran back to his wife, but she had already heard the news; and when Maxwell entered his labourer's cottage, he found her there.

Hamberton was badly shaken and unnerved: but other-

wise had suffered but little. It appears that after Maxwell and Claire had left for Lisheen he had sunk into a doze in his arm-chair, from which he was rudely awakened by the cry of "Fire!" Unable to help himself or to rise, he was thinking of the dread possibility before him, when one of his servants entered his room, and said, in his calm, English way:

"The 'ouse is afire, sir! I think we 'ad better be amoving hout!"

"Certainly. Get some help," said Hamberton.

The man vanished, and did not return.

Hamberton, now thoroughly dismayed, made an effort to save himself, but fell back helplessly. He was now face to face with the Fate he had so often wooed.

As yet, no trace of the fire was visible in his room; but he heard that deep, distant rumbling of the terrible element, and the cries of the frightened servants, and the crash of furniture and heavy timbers, and the gathering of the crowd outside, and their awestricken exclamations. And then, a tiny brown cloud gathered in beneath his door, and soon the room was filled with the choking vapour; but he lay helpless, as if bound with chains, awaiting the final stroke, that would come, he thought, at any moment.

Presently, a frightened maid burst in, and cried:

"Fly, sir, fly for your life! The whole house is in flames. Nothing can save it!"

Hamberton smiled sardonically. He could only sit still and listen to the ravages made by the conflagration; and wonder, would the floor where he sat fall in, and cast him into a furnace of fire; or would the smoke, ever grow-

ing thicker and thicker, suffocate him. He hoped so. He had read that this was always the case in deaths by fire. The victim was always unconscious before the flames actually reached him. And then, it was only cremation of his corpse; and surely this was only his own last instruction to his executors.

"Not thus, though," he thought, whilst the thickening fumes choked him, and made him cough. "Clearly, there is a God guiding things: but not always in our way. And he is a mocking God, who plays with us like puppets. I wonder what would he do, if I spoke to him?"

He bent his head, and spoke strange things, that are not to be found in any ordinary Prayer-book. And then he laughed, whilst his cough grew painful; and there was a growing constriction in his chest, that seemed to make breathing impossible, and to set his heart wildly throbbing. And ever and ever came that terrible rumbling, as of a great earth-upheaval, and crash after crash, as the heavy timbers of the house seemed to rip asunder, and to fall into the sea of fire. Then he became conscious of the carpet smoking beneath his chair, and presently little jets became visible between the boards.

"It is the end!" he said, closing his eyes, when the door was burst violently open, and a great, gaunt figure, its head wrapped in a sheet, broke into the room.

"Where are ye? Where are ye, yer 'anner?" it cried. "Quick, quick, for the luv of God!"

"Here!" said Hamberton, faintly, whilst he felt his eyes painfully throbbing, and he could hardly breathe.

In an instant, a strong hand had wheeled his bath-chair towards the great window that faced the west.

There was a crash of glass, where Ned Galwey, leaping on the sill, drove his foot again and again through the framework of the window; and whilst the smoke broke through the aperture, Hamberton felt a delicious breath of cool night air on his forehead; and he braced himself to make one last fight for life with his brave rescuer.

But the terrible problem now confronted them how, — could Hamberton, heavy and helpless, be removed? Galwey had shouted down through the smoke to bring the ladders around; and this was speedily done. But the window was fifteen or twenty feet from the ground, Hamberton was a helpless log, the fire had gained from beneath, and the floor and carpets were smouldering in some places, blazing in others. It was only a matter of a few minutes for that floor to fall in and bury them both in the furnace beneath. Hamberton saw it all; and, revived to consciousness and a sense of sight by the night-wind that sometimes conquered the fierce volumes of smoke, and made a pleasant draught in the burning room, he shouted:

"Jump down, Galwey! Jump down, and save yourself! You have a wife and family, remember!"

Galwey pulled by main strength the helpless form onto the broad window-sill, and there for a moment they both rested. They could see, sometimes, as the smoke lifted or cleared, the faces of the crowd, reddened by the light that shone from the burning room beneath them. There was a great cheer, when the ladders having been placed against the window-sill, the faces and forms of the two helpless men were seen; and, as is usual in an Irish crowd,

there were sundry suggestions, uttered in all keys of excitement, none of which was really practicable.

Again Hamberton ordered Galwey to leave him to his fate and save himself.

"There's no use, Galwey," he cried, with a choked voice, "we cannot both go down. Quick, while there's time, and save yourself."

"You wance did me a wrong, yer 'anner," said Ned. "I want to show you now how I can repay it."

A terrible suspicion crossed Hamberton's mind. All the old prejudices against these truculent Irish seemed to flash up in an instant. He is going to take a terrible revenge, he thought. But the next instant, he dismissed the base suspicion. And Galwey, coolly taking off the wet sheet that had already shielded his eyes and face from the flames, threw it around Hamberton's head. Then slowly creeping out, he planted one foot on the first rung of each ladder, shouting to the people beneath:

"Hould hard for yere lives there below, and throw all yere weight against the ladders." There were plenty volunteers to do the work.

Then he drew the helpless form of Hamberton head foremost through the window, and never lost nerve, although they shouted from beneath:

"Hurry, Ned, the fire is breaking through the window, and will ketch the ladders."

It was a moment of supreme anxiety, when the whole dead-weight of Hamberton's body, freed from the support of the window, fell on the devoted fellow. But, accustomed to great emergencies and trials of muscular strength in his daily avocation as labourer and fisherman,

he was equal to the call. And bracing himself carefully against the two ladders, he bore the first shock with safety. Then carefully feeling downwards with his feet, he held the helpless burden safe with his strong shoulders and arms. The flames breaking from the room beneath through the shattered window caught both sometimes, and burned their hands and clothing. But at length they reached the ground, and within the help of friendly hands, and fell into the arms of an exultant and triumphant crowd.

When Maxwell, therefore, entered Donegan's cottage, after a few inquiries had been made, Hamberton ordered him to go at once and see after the condition of his brave deliverer. This was worse than was supposed. Ned had been badly burned before he had reached Hamberton's room. The left sleeve of his coat had been completely destroyed in his fight with the flames, as he tore blindly, and with covered head, through the hall and up along the stairs; and the flesh from shoulder to arm was badly scorched. Yet he made nothing of it. Maxwell was dumb before such heroism. He could say nothing but:

"Keep it well covered; and above all, let no water touch it, until my wife comes up!"

"Is the masther all right?" asked Ned, heedless of himself.

"He is, my poor fellow, except for some slight bruises. This night won't be forgotten, you may be sure!"

"He done good to the people," said Ned. "He desarved a good return."

"And he has got it," said Maxwell. "You'll have no reason to regret what you have done."

"I want nothing," said Ned. "But, maybe, yer 'anner ——"

He stopped suddenly.

"Well?" said Maxwell.

"Maybe yer 'anner would ax the masther not to say anny more about the 'Ghosht' or the 'praties'?"

For this was the eternal jest of Hamberton, who, in the boat, on the road, — everywhere, never ceased nagging poor Ned about the famous adventure; quite unconscious, we may presume, how his words galled and burned the heart of his victim.

"All right, Ned!" said Maxwell. "I promise you you'll never hear of them again!"

"God bless yer 'anner," said Ned.

They talked over the matter, Claire and Hamberton and Maxwell, during these days, when the destruction of Brandon Hall, and all its treasures, gave them plenty of leisure to think. They came to the conclusion that just as in the Army the Irish soldiers may break the hearts of their officers in barracks, and the heads of their enemies in the field, so in civil life, if their little ways are tantalizing, and quite opposed to English ways and methods, they can always be depended on in a great crisis, where their loyalty and fidelity are in question.

"I'll never have an English servant in my house again!" said Hamberton. "Damn them. You saw how they ran that night!"

And when Father Cosgrove, proud of his people, called to offer his condolence to his friend, he was at once shut up.

"I don't want to make you too conceited," said Hamberton, "but I must make another admission. You remember, I said there was a God!"

"Yes," said the priest.

"I wish to add something else."

The priest waited.

"Men are not *all* bad!"

Slowly but majestically a beautiful château in the Louis Quatorze style, faced with red and white brick, arose from the ruins of the burned house, and fronted the ever-heaving and tossing and restless sea. Slowly but surely new works were erected, and cottages built, and larger enterprises opened. Slowly but surely a happy and thriving and industrious population grew up around the "Great House": a population knitted in the firmest bonds of loyalty to those who were protecting and helping them.

And any one of these fine days you may see a bath-chair, in which is an invalid gentleman, rolled slowly along the beach by a one-armed man. A soldier? Well, yes! Had been under fire? Yes, again. And wounded? Yes, once more! It is our friend Ned. The arm had to be amputated in Cork. But no matter. He need work no more. And the old man is very gentle and patient; and has never again even whispered to Ned about the "Ghosht" or the "praties."

But Darby Leary? Have we forgotten Darby? By no manner of means. Darby is all right. Down there in the lodge, built also in Louis Quatorze style, I sup-

pose, to suit Darby's tastes, is the neatest little snuggery of a home within the four seas of Ireland. Red and white brick facings, diamond window-panes, riotous and voluptuous creepers without; and within, such neatness and comfort and snugness that sometimes Noney says it is all a "dhrame," an Arabian Nights' Entertainment, from which some day she will wake up to see the old thatched roof over her head, and the pit of green and yellow slime before her door.

But this cannot be. Because that lovely brick fireplace is a reality; and that tiled floor is a reality; and those white beds there in the little recess are realities; and — here is a young Noney, her father's treasure and delight, a reality in yellow curls, and blue eyes, and pink cheeks; and greatest reality of all, here in the cradle are the *Immortal Twins*. They are the torment of Darby's life. Noney is all right; and, when hoisted in Darby's arms, she plucks with her little pink fingers Darby's moustache, (for Darby has now a red, bristling moustache, fierce as that of a French *sabreur*), he shrieks out, but tolerates it, because Noney is the light of his eyes. But those twins! "Dang them!" Darby says, but always beyond his wife's hearing. They were duly christened Jeremiah and Daniel. Here comes in another question. Why have the Irish selected these two of the four major prophets as patronymics so popular that every second boy in Ireland is Jerry or Dan? But Isaiah and Ezekiel are nowhere. And if any unhappy boy sported these names, his life would be evermore a torment. But to return, Jeremiah and Daniel emerged from the baptismal waters good Christians with respectable names; but alas! they rapidly

descended into the more prosaic and humble forms of Jerry and Dan. Now, here is Darby's great trial. He cannot distinguish the twins. He can no more tell which is Jerry, and which is Dan than he can distinguish Castor and Pollux in the heavens.

Noney has not the slightest trouble about the matter. With absolute unerringness, she can distinguish her boys, although she admits that "they are as alike as two pays"; and she waxes indignant when Darby comes home to his dinner, and Noney happens to have Jerry in her arms, and Darby affectionately, but foolishly, strokes the boy's head, and asks, how is his Danny to-day?

"This isn't Danny, you fool! This is Jerry. Anywan can see that!"

"Oh, of coorse," Darby would say. "Of coorse, it is Jerry. Shure anywan would know that!"

But to-morrow the same mistake occurs; and Danny is taken for Jerry, and Jerry for Danny, promiscuously.

It is in the cradle, however, the great trouble arises. It is an understood thing that Jerry occupies the place of honour on the right and Danny is relegated to the left. One would suppose there could be no mistake here. But Darby, though he knows his right hand from his left, and boasts of the knowledge, is sorely tried to know which is the right-hand side of the cradle, and which the left-hand side. And the trouble is aggravated because the cradle happens to be but a flat soap-box, with no canopy, or other distinguishing characteristic; and, as Noney slews it around to every point of the compass, poor Darby is in an ecstasy of anxiety every time he comes home and is called upon to distinguish them.

"Av coorse," he says, "Jerry is to the right. That's there!" pointing to his own right hand. "An' Danny is there!" pointing to the left.

"Well, you're the biggest *omadhaun* the Lord ever made!" his wife remarks. "Didn't I tell you twinty times that that's Jerry, and that that's Danny?"

"Av coorse, av coorse," says Darby. "Shure anywan would know that. Shure 'tis Darby, me own namesake, that have such purty curls an his forehead."

"'Tisn't then," his wife replies, "that's Danny, that have the curls. But Darby is growing them too!"

"Av coorse, av coorse!" Darby replies. "But I wouldn't give the two av 'em together for Noney. Come, Noney, come! There, acushla!" as the child nestles in his arms, and mingles her silken curls in her father's carrotty locks; "*acushla machree!* us two agin the world! What do we care for thim ould twins? Aren't you me own little *Cailin Ban?* Aren't you the pulse of me heart, *m'ainim no shtig! m'ainim machree!* Phew! There, look, you're hurtin' me. Phew! There! We'll throw out thim ould twins, an' keep thegither always, won't we, alanna?"

And the original Noney takes up the dialogue, and talks back to the twins; and the atmosphere waxes warm, and Darby is glad to get out into the cool sunlit air, and talk all his love nonsense to Noney undisturbed.

And sometimes Claire comes down, wheeling gaily her own perambulator up to Noney's cottage, and compares her own brown baby with the twins; and they talk in the motherly dialects that are as old, I suppose, as Eve; and almost invariably, after these little interchanges of

compliments, certain little baskets come down from the "Great House"; and Darby has the pleasure of seeing on his kitchen table the "two kinds of mate" that were ever and always to his mind the outward and visible sign of that mighty gift of the gods — prosperity.

Robert Maxwell has one misgiving. He knows his happiness, and, like a sensible man, enjoys it. He knows, too, that he has chosen the better part, when he compares his present position with that of the club-frequenting, fox-hunting, rack-renting, mindless, and godless class, whose days must be filled with ever-increasing, ever-changing excitement, to save them from suicidal mania. Life to him is Duty. But, sometimes, he thinks he has earned his honours too cheaply. True, the remembrance of those awful nights which he spent staring into the darkness, until the faint pencils of the dawn drew beneath the hideous thatch the white canvases of the cities of the spiders; of the days that went by, in fog and mist, so slowly that he thought they would never again darken into night; of the aches and pains that racked his feeble muscles under the unaccustomed exercise of work; of the loneliness that filled his soul, cut away from all familiar associations with his own class; of the loathing of rough food, and coarse raiment; of that awful sickness with its delirium, when he cried: *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani!* Of his mistakes, his humiliation, his anguish under misconception, his separation from those he respected and loved; of their contempt; of public hatred and dislike; of imputed crimes of which he was never guilty; finally, of the gaol, the white-washed walls, the shame of arrest, the desecration of a policeman's hands on

his shoulder; — all this, of course, made him feel that he had passed well through his novitiate of sorrow, and had borne well the "Test of the Spirits."

Nevertheless, and most of all in these sweet summer evenings when all were gathered down there on the beach, and the spent seas came fawning in, and skies were daffodil in the west; and when he looked around and saw his people made happy by his benevolence, and sharing with a noble and reverential equality, the society of their benefactors; when his eyes fell on labourers resting from their toils, and happy mothers crooning over their children, and the young people dancing in fairy rings to the sound of flute or fiddle; and above all, when his thoughts came back, and he remembered the sad fate of Outram, and the banishment of his cousin, and saw in the place she should have occupied the companion of his cares and of his triumphs, he thought, with that strange depression that comes in the hour of success, that, after all, there might have been something even better—the farewell to a world he would have served, not under the glitter and glamour of triumph, but in the very agony of crucifixion. For then, he thought, he might have had a claim to the red robe and palm of martyrdom, which after all, are more glorious than the laurels and regalia of one who has fought, and suffered, and triumphed. There is some hidden nobility in failure, when the cause itself is great."

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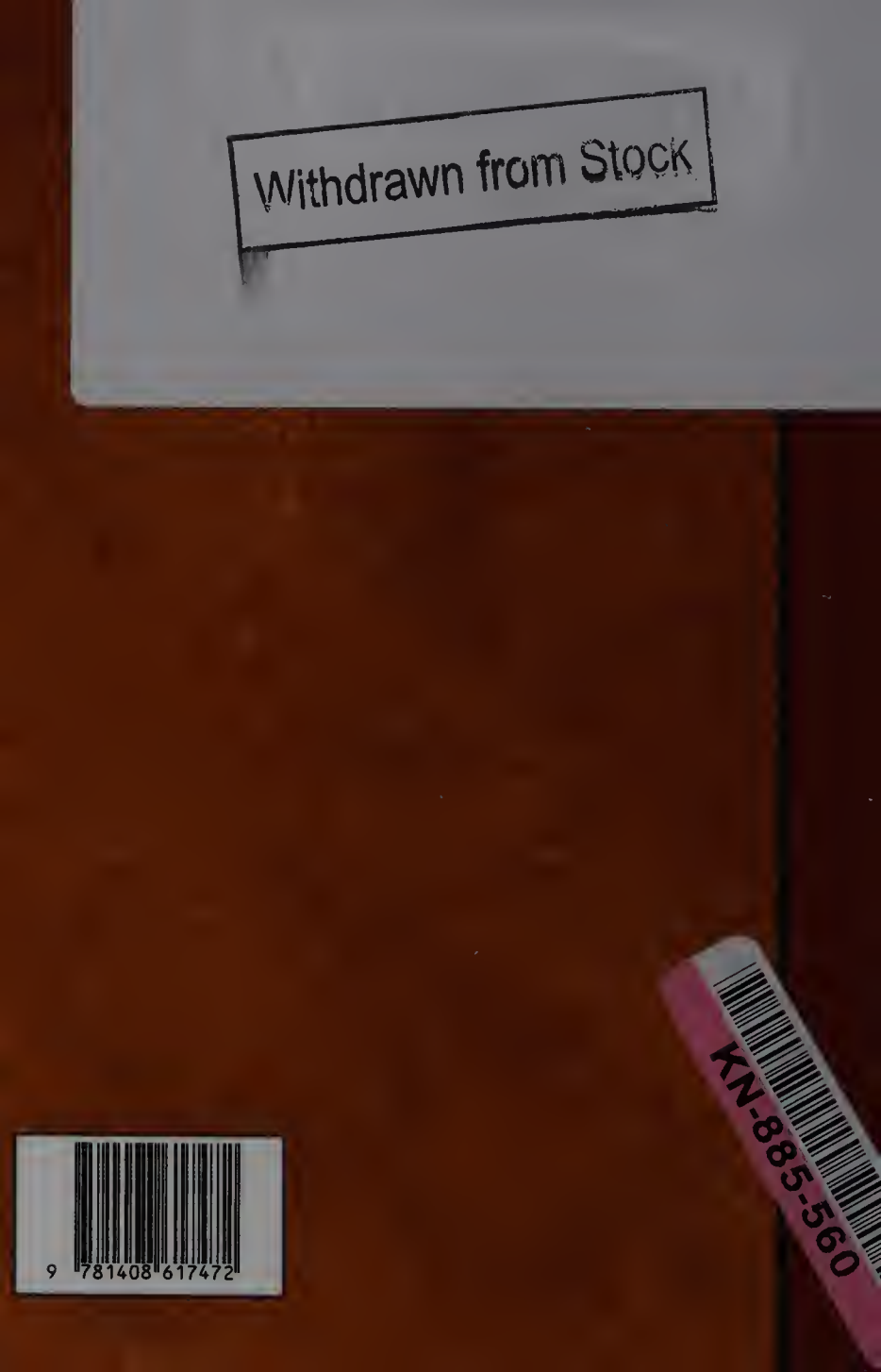

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